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JACOB S. HACKER

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JOSEPH BRAUDE

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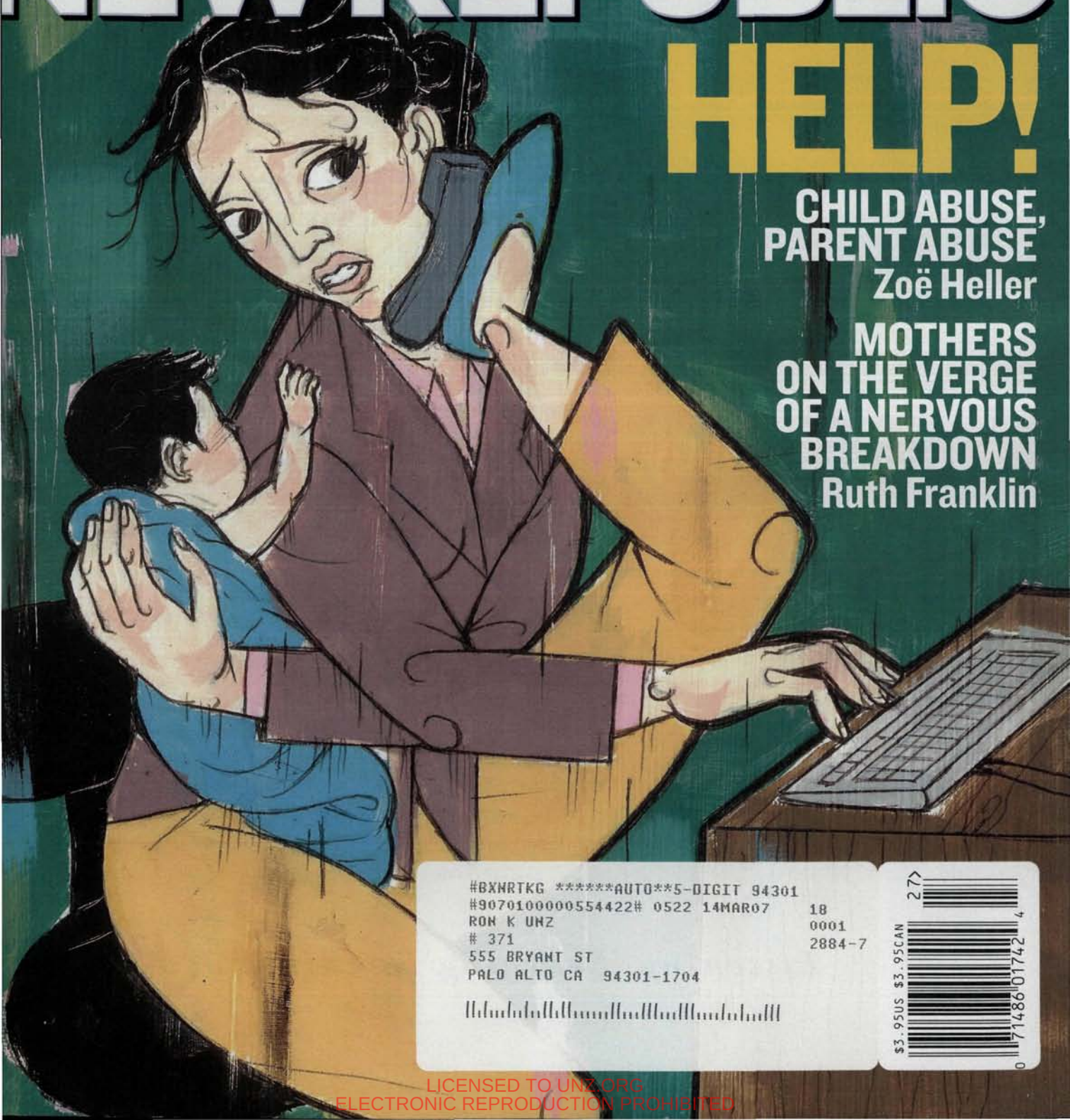
THE NEW REPUBLIC

HELP!

CHILD ABUSE, PARENT ABUSE
Zoë Heller

MOTHERS ON THE VERGE OF A NERVOUS BREAKDOWN
Ruth Franklin



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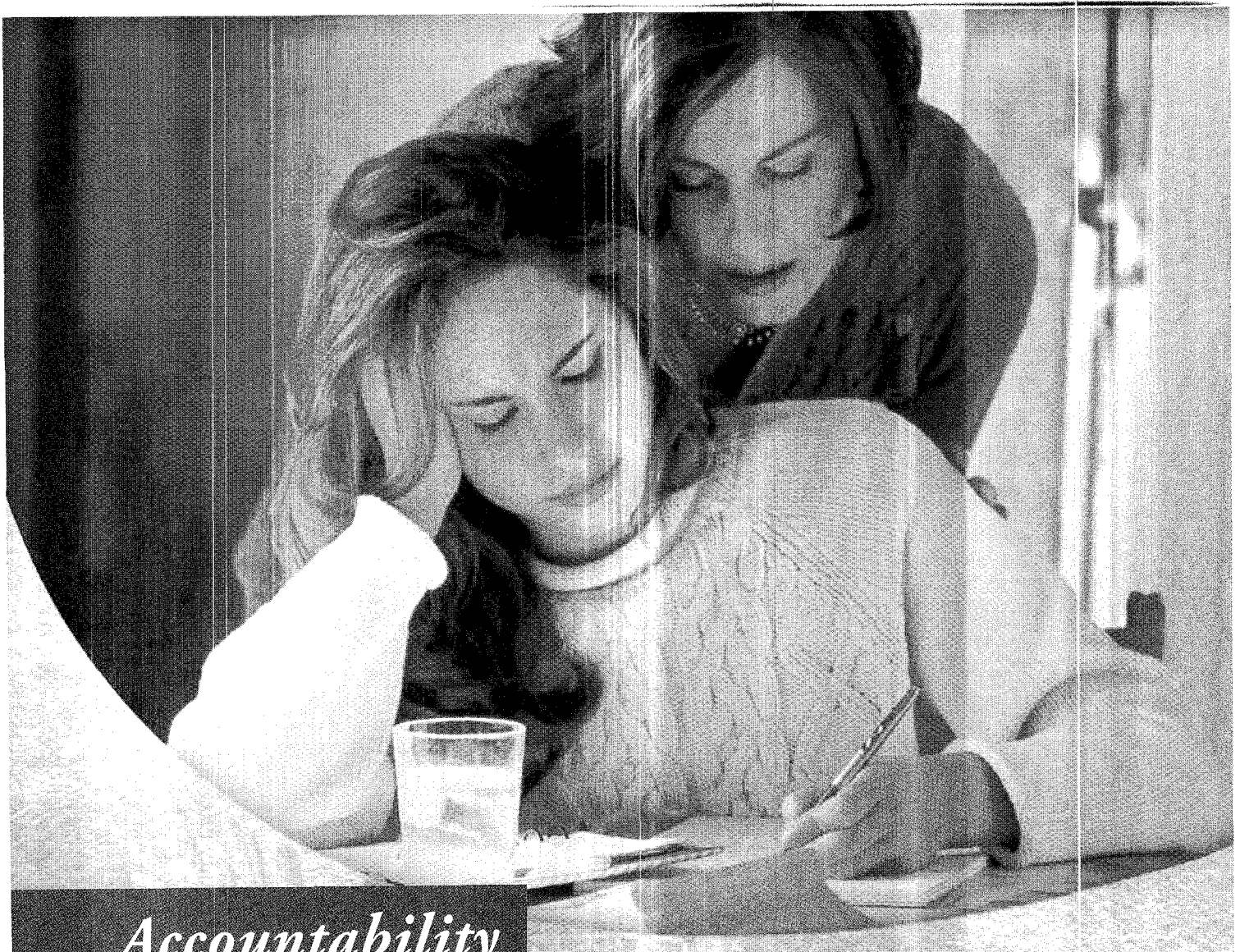

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THE NEW REPUBLIC
A JOURNAL OF POLITICS AND THE ARTS

JULY 4, 2005 WASHINGTON, D.C. ISSUE 4,720 VOLUME 233

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CORRESPONDENCE

RIGHT WITH GOD?

As a Christian with a divinity degree and about to begin doctoral work at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, I can offer one bit of insight about the conservative divide Andrew Sullivan cites ("Crisis of Faith," May 2 & 9). The problem is that "conservative" Christians have no idea what it means to be conservative Christians. Jesus taught that we who follow Him will "bring good news to the poor, release to the captive," and relief for the diseased—we are instruments of mercy among the poor, suffering, and marginalized. The Gospel of Christ is absolutely radical. Denying the children of illegal immigrants necessary social services, waging retaliatory war, ignoring the poor, providing medical care based on ability to pay, homophobia, sexism, and classism are not remotely Christian, "conservative" or otherwise.

DOY L. DANIELS JR.
Collierville, Tennessee

As a Mennonite, I have looked upon the "conservatism" of George W. Bush with fear, for in it I see a repeat of the coercion used against my Anabaptist forefathers. We Christians need to be reminded again and again that our calling is to faith and a deep respect for those who may differ from us.

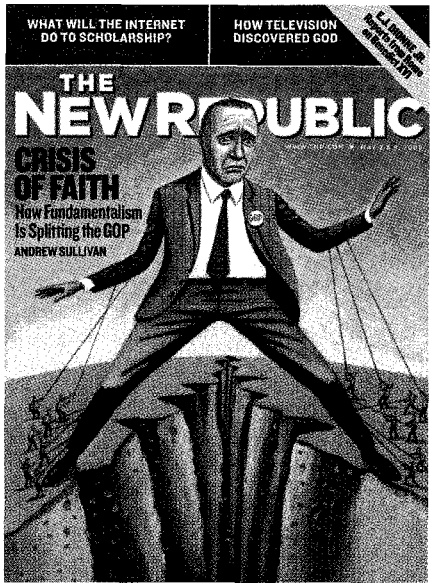
JERRY W. BARKMAN
Dallas, Oregon

PAPER OVER

Like David A. Bell, I believe we are heading for a mostly, if not fully, digital library ("The Bookless Future," May 2 & 9). Eventually, most new books will be born digital, and the handheld reading device will be perfected. But the way in which Bell muddles the difference between content that is available for "free" on the Internet and content that is copyrighted obscures a crucial issue. He states that "every issue ever printed of *The New York Times*" is already available to anyone with an Internet connection. But, if you want to obtain the full text of an older article, rather than a simple citation, you must pay up to $3.95 for it. Or, if you are affiliated with a library that has purchased a subscription, you will not have to pay—but the subscription will be accessible only to the library's authorized users. Either way, the entire contents of the *Times*—and most or all of the other resources that Bell lists in the same paragraph—cost thousands to tens of thousands of dollars each year. Viewed clearly, the "democratizing potential" of digital libraries begins to tarnish. And, if the trend toward tighter copyright restrictions continues, the need to pay for access will only increase. When Bell glosses over these facts in the thrill of what technology can send to his front porch, he lulls people into false complacency about our brave new Internet world. Such complacency works to the advantage of for-profit publishing and to the disadvantage of libraries and individual citizens. While we focus on the wonders of technology, information and knowledge may become, once again, accessible only to the wealthy. In a manner we did not expect, the bookless future might, indeed, turn into a barbarian age.

CARLA B. TRACY
Director
Thomas Tredway Library
Augustana College
Rock Island, Illinois

Bell omitted mention of an important failing of electronic texts: their lack of durability. In libraries, monasteries, and private collections, the books that form the foundation for our culture have survived plagues, revolutions, climatic shifts, and total war. Yet e-books are only as durable as the technological civilization that produces them. Were society to experience a shock sufficient


WHAT WILL THE INTERNET DO TO SCHOLARSHIP?
HOW TELEVISION DISCOVERED GOD
THE NEW REPUBLIC
CRISIS OF FAITH
How Fundamentalism Is Splitting the GOP
ANDREW SULLIVAN

to end the manufacture and repair of computers—for even as little as one decade—every electronic text that had ever been written would vanish like a puff of smoke. Such a barbarous turn of events is difficult to contemplate, but history may make fools of us yet. Can we afford to dispense with our cultural insurance policy? One printed on acid-free paper?

AARON WALTON
Elsternwick, Australia

Bell ignores the problem of the rapid obsolescence of digital media and formats. Books that were produced hundreds of years ago are still readable today. They are directly accessible to humans, without the need for any equipment or software. But digital files created a mere ten years ago often can no longer be read, either because they are stored on media that are now obsolete or because they can be read only with software that is no

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longer available. Keeping digital texts readable requires recurring cycles of copying to new media and conversion to new formats. Who is going to manage, execute, and pay for this never-ending effort? As the volume of digital material grows, it will become impossible to keep up. Inevitably, many texts will become unavailable after a relatively short time. It is already harder to read a XyWrite document on a 5.25-inch floppy disk than it is to find a rare work in a university library somewhere. A hundred years from now, books that are printed today will still be readable. Will there be any way to read today's HTML documents stored on CD-ROM?

ROBERT J. SANDLER
Teaneck, New Jersey

WHILE BELL DESCRIBES THE strengths of Internet research (speed, availability), he elides the most important problem: inaccuracy. Just hours before I wrote this letter, a student came to my office to complain about his grade on an essay about a poem. He had done a lot of research on the poem, W. B. Yeats's "The Second Coming." To show him that he happened to land on a half-dozen implausible readings of the poem, I Googled the poem: The first five hits began by misquoting Yeats's poem, and the errors proliferated from there. Does Bell trust that the Internet version of Edmund Burke's *Letters on a Regicide Peace* is textually accurate? The Internet is a great tool, but I wonder if it can teach anyone how to conduct responsible research.

JAMES LONGENBACH
English Department
University of Rochester
Rochester, New York

KUDOS TO THE EDITORS FOR THEIR deliciously ironic placement of an advertisement for "The Dolley Madison Digital Edition" inside Bell's thorough treatment of Internet scholarship. The occasional tongue in cheek found in the pages of THE NEW REPUBLIC is always a welcome and pleasant contrast to the often harrowing reality of contemporary politics and culture.

ZEV NAGEL
New York, New York

DAVID A. BELL RESPONDS:
The "bookless future" will suffer from many technical difficulties, including those pointed to here, but it's important not to project experiences from the early days of personal computing into the coming age of digital libraries. Format conversion has been considerably less of a problem since the mid-'90s, precisely because of the value of information already available in digital form—your browser can still read the earliest documents composed in HTML. The price of storage space continues to plummet, making it likely that multiple copies of digital treasures will do at least as well as flammable paper in a new Dark Ages. Subscription content is a problem, but, as in the case of digital music, competition from free content (e.g., Google's digital library) and the dangers of piracy are likely to combine to keep prices reasonable.

PRAYTIME

THE EDITORS MADE SOLID POINTS about the victimhood–identity politics shtick being undertaken by Bill Frist and religious conservatives ("Religious Sanction," May 2 & 9). But the article inaccurately asserted that prayer in school is, "for the most part," unconstitutional. In fact, students have a constitutionally protected right, per the First Amendment's Free Exercise clause, to pray on their own in school—before the school day or before a meal, for example. The Supreme Court has also ruled in favor of students' rights to have after-hours Bible study clubs and the like, but teacher-led school prayer and officially sanctioned time for prayer are unconstitutional per the Establishment Clause. I often suspect that religious Americans would be less threatened by the Court's so-called "ban" on school prayer if they realized that it didn't exist—that the ban only applies to official school sanctioning of prayer or time for prayer.

MICHAEL SMITH
Kansas City, Missouri

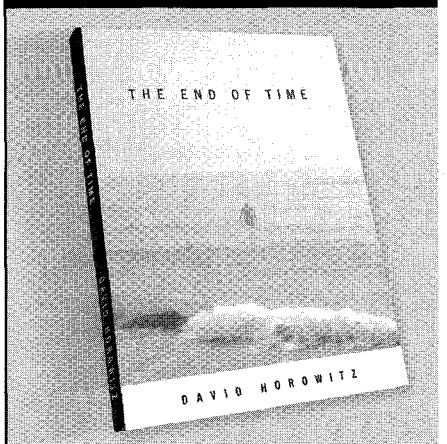
CONTAIN OURSELF

THE ELEGANT ESSAY BY JOHN Lewis Gaddis on the legacy of George Kennan helps to recover the imaginative and thoroughly historical thinking summed up by the term "containment" in the late '40s ("After Containment," April 25). What struck me was the contrast between the architects of our cold war policy then and the architects of our post–September 11 war on terrorism now. Kennan's key insight, a direct reversal of the Marxist-Leninist prophecy, was that history was on the side of the West. And, in 1991, he was proved right. That same insight transfers even more potently to the Islamic fundamentalist threat, a *cri de coeur* from the Dark Ages with none of the utopian appeal of communism.

So why have we chosen to attack it frontally in its own homeland? Why not let it dissipate its suicidal energies against itself, rather than energize it with our occupation of Iraq? If the one-word answer is "oil," then let us announce a commitment to be energy-independent in ten years. Nothing would do more to contain, and eventually destroy, the global leverage of the Middle East states and the terrorists they harbor.

JOSEPH J. ELLIS
Professor of History
Mount Holyoke College
South Hadley, Massachusetts

"This is a poignant and powerful rumination on the meaning of life and the meaning of death. Horowitz faces his intimations of immortality with both emotional and intellectual depth..."
~ *Walter Issacson, former editor, TIME; author, Benjamin Franklin: An American Life*



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Primary Concern

TRB FROM WASHINGTON

IF LAST WEEK'S SAGGING POLL NUMbers on Iraq marked the return of the war as a political issue, then Democrats found themselves playing the role of Wal-Mart greeters, gamely ushering it through the door. This month, several House Democrats have initiated resolutions calling on the White House to develop an exit strategy for Iraq. Elsewhere in the Capitol—or, more precisely, in the basement below it—Michigan Representative John Conyers recently staged a mock hearing on the war. (The out-of-power Dems can't convene real hearings.) One "witness" railed against an apparent neocon plot to put the United States and Israel in charge of Middle Eastern oil. Another speaker raised the possibility of impeaching President Bush and argued that the so-called Downing Street Memo, an assessment by British intelligence in July 2002 that the administration had already decided to invade, was as incriminating as the Watergate tapes. From a p.r. perspective, probably the most helpful moment of the day came when a Democratic staffer inexplicably unbuttoned her blouse and began nursing an infant—while the C-SPAN cameras were rolling. At least no one can accuse the party of lacking family values.

For those of us who believe Democrats won't be taken seriously until they beef up their national security bona fides, the spectacle of liberals channeling their most conspiratorial impulses can be too much to bear. "Although the public's perception of Iraq is changing, Democrats cannot become the antiwar party," wrote the Democratic Leadership Council's Marshall Wittmann this week. "Even at the apex of the Vietnam war in 1968, the American people elected the most hawkish candidate." Unfortunately, with antiwar liberals like Wisconsin Senator Russ Feingold weighing presidential runs, the chances of Democrats nominating a candidate who doesn't pander to their most dovish instincts appear increasingly slim.

But it would be a mistake to assume that repudiating the war will be the only way to win the party's nomination, or even the most expedient. While the Democratic base will be every bit as vocal and exercised in 2008 as it was last year—probably more so—Iraq is unlikely to be the litmus test some moderates fear.

Just look at what's actually going on in the world of liberal opinion: Earlier this month, John Edwards, who voted for the war, received a standing ovation from liberal activists at the annual Take Back America conference in Washington. In a recent (highly unscientific) poll of potential 2008 candidates on *Daily Kos*, the preeminent liberal blog, Edwards finished a mere two points behind Feingold, who opposed both the war and the Patriot Act. Meanwhile, Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid—war supporter, pro-lifer, gun-control skeptic—is emerging as a popular politician in his own right. According to a Gallup poll conducted in late May, about three-quarters of liberals who have formed an opinion about Reid have a favorable impression of him, roughly the same ratio that applies to Howard Dean.

What explains their popularity? The contrast between Edwards and someone like Senator Joe Biden is instructive. Like Edwards, Biden supported the war. Unlike Edwards, Biden has drawn mostly jeers from liberals. Among liberal bloggers, the most typical reaction to Biden's recent announcement that he plans to run for president is a sneering allusion to Joe Lieberman's unfortunate 2004 campaign mantra, "Joementum."

Edwards has positioned himself differently from Biden in two respects. The first is economic policy. In his Take Back America speech, Edwards reprised some of the themes he honed on the campaign trail in 2004—the Bush administration's knack for rewarding wealth, not work, and the "two Americas" that have resulted. More importantly, though, he stridently denounced the GOP's Social Security privatization efforts, its attempts to cut Medicaid benefits, and, most noxious of all, its recent creditor-friendly bankruptcy bill. Biden, it should be noted, has criticized Social Security privatization. But he frequently votes with Republicans on legislation that benefits credit card companies. His vote for the bankruptcy bill is a betrayal few liberals are willing to forget.

Second, Edwards's speech was partisan and aggrieved, if not quite Dean-like in its anger. Edwards derided media "yappers" who claim Democrats need to "figure out how to ... nuance some of their positions." After a brief riff about the importance of spreading freedom and democracy throughout the world—not exactly partisan red meat these days—Edwards closed with a confession. "I got to get this off my chest," he said to laughter. "While we're working on democracy over there, we got a little work to do on democracy over here"—an allusion to liberal suspicions of rampant vote-suppression and fraud in 2004. Biden, by contrast, epitomizes the kind of reasonable centrism liberals believe Republicans have exploited on everything from tax cuts to the war. (In many cases, they're right.) Liberals particularly detest his occasional shots at Dean. "Let's also not forget that [Biden] was one of the ones demanding that Dean back away from his statements about Republicans," wrote one *Daily Kos* reader in response to Biden's presidential announcement.

Obviously, it's not that liberals don't care about the war anymore. It's that a candidate's position on the war ultimately tells them less about what they really care about than the candidate's economic agenda or even his rhetorical style. And what liberals really care about is that a candidate share their view that the administration is fundamentally irredeemable: It can't be reasoned with; it must be beaten, preferably in humiliating fashion.

For the most part, liberal Democrats are willing to compromise in pursuit of this goal. In 2004, for example, they recognized that the country was to their right on national security, which, they assumed, would be a key issue, and so they nominated a war hero. What liberals can't abide is *gratuitous* compromise. And since, unlike on national security, they believe the country is closer to them than to the GOP on most economic issues—again, with much justification—Biden-like compromises on issues like the bankruptcy bill are anathema.

For Democrats, in other words, the key divide in 2008 won't be ideological so much as it will be characterological. That's a good sign for candidates who supported the war, such as Edwards and even Hillary Clinton. And, considering the alternative, it's an even better sign for the party. **NOAM SCHEIBER**

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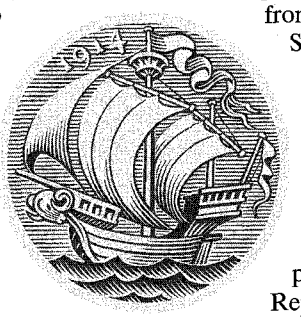
Power Failure

NO ONE WOULD support a crime bill that didn't mention murder, a Social Security bill that said nothing about benefits, or an anti-terrorism bill without provisions concerning the capture of terrorists. But, this week, the Senate is debating the equivalent, as it considers an omnibus energy bill that says nothing about the number-one problem in U.S. energy policy: rising petroleum consumption by cars, SUVs, and trucks. This issue swamps all other energy policy concerns combined. Yet the administration's energy bill, more than four years in the making, does absolutely nothing to mandate or even encourage higher miles-per-gallon (MPG) performance by U.S. vehicles. This makes the energy bill one of the most preposterous pieces of major legislation ever seriously considered by the U.S. Congress, which, we realize, is saying a lot.

The Senate even rejected a symbolic amendment setting a national goal of gradual petroleum-use reduction by 2025, due to Republican opposition. But it's not just the White House and Hill Republicans who are to blame. Democrats have done little to promote fuel-efficiency standards; most seem content to enact a legislative endorsement of the low-MPG, mega-SUV status quo. The overall fuel mileage of new cars, trucks, and SUVs has been declining since 1988; a succession of presidents from both parties has done everything possible to avoid the issue. Rising U.S. petroleum imports are driven mainly by the need to fill the tanks of more low-mileage vehicles. The Department of Energy estimates that, if every personal-use vehicle in the United States were just one mile-per-gallon more efficient, the United States would save more than 100 million barrels of oil per year and reduce carbon dioxide emissions by more than ten million metric tons annually. At this writing, the world oil price has just topped a record $59 a barrel. Supply is not the problem—oil inventories are at an all-time high. But rising demand—not just in the United States, but in places like China and India as well—drives up price. Rising oil prices worsen the U.S. balance-of-payments deficit, keep the nation dependent on Persian Gulf dictatorships, and channel ever-more cash to the oil sheiks who fund Islamist terrorism (see "Oil-for-Feud," page 14). The energy bill does nothing to change this dynamic.

To be sure, the energy bill contains some attractive provisions. The most important would make likely a new natural gas pipeline to bring methane from Alaska's North Slope to the 48 states, a widely supported idea that is unrelated to proposals to drill in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Natural gas prices are rising, and supply has become a problem for the petrochemical industry: A pipeline from Alaska is badly needed. Other provisions would make likely, though not certain, the construction of a new generation of safe nuclear reactors. Nuclear power is the sole greenhouse-neutral technology available to produce electricity in large amounts. (Renewable sources, such as wind and solar power, are also greenhouse-neutral, but cannot supply electricity in the sheer quantities that nuclear power can.)



In a first step toward action against artificial global warming, the Senate approved a resolution, sponsored by Republican Pete Domenici and Democrat Jeff Bingaman, acknowledging that "mandatory steps" are required regarding greenhouse gases. The resolution, modeled on a proposal of the bipartisan National Commission on Energy Policy, puts the Senate on record as accepting the scientific consensus that global warming is a danger. This is an important start; all corporate leaders know greenhouse gas restrictions are needed.

There are, however, many clunker provisions in the energy bill. House Republicans added billions of dollars in tax breaks for the oil industry, a mature sector that needs no government support—and that has already benefitted enormously from the run-up in petroleum prices. The farm-state delegation added even more federal subsidies for research on ethanol, a fuel that, some studies show, requires more petroleum to produce than it replaces.

Meanwhile, the lack of provisions to increase car and SUV fuel efficiency is simply a scandal. Democrats run from the issue because most SUVs are built by the United Auto Workers. Republicans run from the issue because they are beholden to big oil producers—such as ExxonMobil—that benefit from higher gasoline prices and essentially give Republicans a commission by contributing heavily to the GOP. Increased MPG standards would reduce U.S. reliance on foreign oil, cut the trade deficit, lower pump prices (by decreasing demand), and reduce greenhouse gases (which are proportional to petroleum burned). Lower oil imports, lower greenhouse gases, lower gasoline prices—now, why would anyone want those things in an energy bill? ■

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NOTEBOOK

AGAINST CHRISTIANITY, DON'T LEGISLATE . . . UPON THE FLAG, DON'T DEFECATE

2 BR., 1.5 BATH, ALL THE DEFENSE CONTRACTS YOU CAN HANDLE

IT'S HARD TO TOP THE JACK ABRAMOFF scandal for brazen sleaziness, but Representative Randy "Duke" Cunningham is trying his best. As *The San Diego Union-Tribune* reported earlier this month, the California Republican has had a most beneficial relationship with a defense executive named Mitchell Wade. According to the paper, about two years ago, Wade bought Cunningham's Del Mar, California, home for $1.675 million and then almost immediately put it back on the market, selling it for a mere $975,000 and taking a $700,000 loss. Cunningham, meanwhile, upgraded to a $2.55 million home. And that's not the only way in which Wade has helped put a roof over Cunningham's head: In Washington, Cunningham lives on a 42-foot yacht—called *The Duke Stir*—which is owned by Wade. Then there are Wade's more conventional contributions to Cunningham, which include $20,000 in "soft money" from Wade's company, MZM, and its affiliates to Cunningham's PAC; and $13,000 from the MZM PAC to Cunningham for his 2004 reelection campaign.

Around the time Wade bought Cunningham's home, MZM—whose literature boasts that it helps government solve "enigmatic problems"—started to secure large contracts with the Department of Defense, winning $65 million worth of Pentagon business in 2004, up from $41 million the previous year. Cunningham, who sits on the House Defense Appropriations Subcommittee, has acknowledged supporting programs that benefitted MZM, but, in a statement, he denied any untoward business with Wade—maintaining that he supported the programs on their merits and that the defense exec paid fair market value for his home. (The wildly inflated value, it turns out, was determined by a real-estate agent friend and campaign contributor of Cunningham's.)

Randy "Duke" Cunningham

This would seem like a case for the House Ethics Committee. But, oh wait: The Ethics Committee isn't taking any cases at the moment, because its Republican chairman wants his chief of staff to serve as the Committee's nonpartisan staff director and the Committee's ranking Democrat won't allow it, which means, for the time being, the Committee can't function. Maybe, by the time it's up and running, Cunningham will have found new living arrangements.

ONWARD CHRISTIAN AIRMEN

THIS PAST ACADEMIC YEAR, CAPTAIN MeLinda Morton, a Lutheran chaplain at the Air Force Academy, reported "systemic and pervasive" religious proselytizing and intolerance at the school. Her complaints were supported by a Yale Divinity School study, which found that one Academy chaplain urged cadets to "try to convert" nonevangelical peers and "remind them of the consequences . . . (that) those not 'born again will burn in the fires of hell.'" One Jewish cadet reported being called a "Christ-killer" by a fellow student.

In response, Wisconsin Representative David Obey, the ranking Democrat on the Appropriations Committee, sponsored an amendment to the defense appropriations bill that would have obliged the Air Force Academy to create a plan to prevent "coercive and abusive religious proselytizing."

But what House Republican worth his salt would allow anti-Christian bigotry like that? Not Representative John Hostettler of Indiana. He asserted that "the long war on Christianity in America continues today on the floor of the House of Representatives," and it "continues unabated with aid and comfort to those who would eradicate any vestige of our Christian heritage being supplied by the usual suspects, the Democrats." He then went on to accuse Democrats of "denigrating and demonizing Christians." Of course, there is more than one way to denigrate a Christian. Morton, for example, was transferred to Okinawa after speaking out (she has chosen to resign her commission instead). But we suspect that sort of discrimination is just fine with Hostettler.

A (FLESH) BURNING ISSUE

REMEMBER NAPALM, THE BURNING fuel gel the United States routinely used in Vietnam, often with devastating effects on the civilian population? So do the British, which is why the English Defence Ministry went to great lengths last January to assure members of Parliament that none of the stuff had been used in Iraq. They had it, Defence Secretary John Reid said recently, on good faith from American officials.

But, when American reporters got a similar line from the Pentagon soon after troops swept into Baghdad, they did some investigating. What they turned up was MK77, an incendiary weapon that

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even a Defense Department spokesman conceded was "remarkably similar" to napalm. One colonel told reporters about an attack on Iraqi troops guarding bridges that spanned the Tigris River on the way to Baghdad, noting, "We napalmed both those approaches."

Reid and his cohorts, however, seem to have missed that news, because it wasn't until this week that they realized that the United States had, in fact, dropped 30 MK77s in Iraq. Calling the whole affair a simple "cock-up," Reid made clear that a technicality saved the day. The United States, he noted, "didn't use napalm. They used a firebomb. It doesn't stick to your skin like napalm." Correct. It merely sets you on fire.

A (FLAG) BURNING ISSUE

In 1989, when the Supreme Court ruled that desecration of the American flag fell under the protection of the First Amendment, it seemed like a perfectly sensible decision. If burning, say, a poster of a Robert Mapplethorpe photograph was legal under the First Amendment, then why, as a constitutional matter, should burning a poster of the Stars and Stripes be distinct? But that was before our current epidemic of flag-burning swept the nation. Now, Republicans have resolved to defend us all with yet another proposed constitutional amendment to ban the practice, and, this time, they may have the votes to do it.

Of course, toying with the First Amendment might look like a risky idea at first. As Hendrik Hertzberg once warned in this magazine: "The flag, as long as it exists in human hearts, is fireproof. The Constitution, however, is more vulnerable." But Senator Orrin Hatch understands where the true threat lies. "It's time to stand up for our symbol," he told *The New York Times*. "I consider defecating on the flag, urinating on the flag, burning the flag with contempt—just to mention three—to be offensive conduct, not speech." Yes, let's save that sort of behavior for the Bill of Rights. ■

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FAILING THE CHALLENGE: President Bush's signature foreign aid program, the Millennium Challenge Account (MCA), has had its problems, but chief administrator Paul Applegarth was not principal among them. *The New York Times* has cheered Applegarth's recent resignation announcement, expressing a hope that the president "appoints a successor more interested in actually giving money to poor people." But Applegarth is not to blame for the program's failure to dispense any money thus far.

The MCA was egregiously behind schedule long before his appointment. Although the president promised to make money available to eligible countries within a year of MCA's unveiling in March 2002, it took Bush nearly that long just to submit draft legislation to Congress. Almost another year passed before the program was signed into law. Applegarth only came on the scene in February 2004, and, since then, his organization has had to rethink the whole tradition of U.S. foreign aid so that it rewards countries that are "ruling justly, investing in their people, and establishing economic freedom."

To be sure, the MCA needs to deliver timely results. But that's harder to do when the president and Congress are so reluctant to provide the necessary staff and other resources. Bush said he would ask Congress for $1.7 billion for the MCA for 2004; he asked for $1.3 billion and got $1 billion. He said he would ask for $3.3 billion for 2005; he asked for $2.5 billion and got $1.5 billion. And, whereas the original MCA proposal promised $5 billion annually by fiscal year 2006, Bush is seeking only $3 billion, and last week, a House subcommittee recommended halving that request.

As I've written ("Democratease," June 6), this half-hearted approach is typical of all the administration's democracy initiatives. It's an attitude that prompted justified criticism last week from five visiting African leaders (though, it should be noted, only two of the countries they represented are eligible for MCA aid). Pushing Applegarth out, however, is a pitiful response to an embarrassing situation. And it won't make any more money available to poor people.

—*Marisa Katz*

JUSTICE DENIED: For some amusing logic, check out June 20's *Wall Street Journal* editorial criticizing the Justice Department for hinting it *might* indict accounting firm KPMG. It begins by comparing KPMG—which has admitted to and apologized for knowingly promoting illegal tax schemes—with Arthur Andersen, whose conviction the Supreme Court overturned last month. Of course, that decision didn't exonerate Andersen; it mostly flayed the judge for giving poor jury instructions. But never mind.

Was it fair, the *Journal* asks, to destroy a company with nearly 20,000 employees for the alleged crimes of a few? (Picture it: "Your honor, I have twelve children who are dependent on me; don't punish them by jailing me for my crimes.") But the Justice Department didn't destroy Arthur Andersen. The free market did. When Andersen's clients learned of its accounting antics, they fled. For the *Journal*, that's the prosecutors' fault, and, using history's example, they shouldn't indict KPMG. (I wish I'd thought to blame the New York health inspector, rather than my favorite Chinese restaurant, when it shut down the eatery for an infestation.) Our fair-minded writers follow with this bit of incoherence to justify ending the investigation:

> Most of the 30 partners notified by Justice that they are targets of the investigation have been given the boot, along with other senior executives.

So, when the D.C. police catch the car thieves in my employ, I'll just fire them and apologize for grand theft auto. No problem.

Moving along, even though KPMG admitted it broke the law, the *Journal* says the real problem isn't KPMG. It's the tax code:

> The fact that [assessing KPMG's legal violations] is no easy question, given the convoluted IRS tax code with its loopholes and built-in incentives to cheat, is another reason for not issuing a blunderbuss indictment.

Next, the *Journal* argues, not only did the Justice Department cause Andersen's implosion, but it also perverted the free market by ending competition and reducing the Big Five to the Big Four.

It's funny: When understand-the-criminal liberals criticize overzealous prosecutors and mandatory minimums for cruelty in the criminal justice system, the *Journal* throws conniptions. But, when the poor, misunderstood criminal is one of the country's four biggest accounting firms, the *Journal* complains about a misguided system and blames the prosecutor for limiting competition.

Hey, with all these problems, why bother with corporate criminal liability in the first place? Then again, maybe that's the point the *Journal* is trying to make.

—*Adam B. Kushner*

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Absolving Germany.

Pass the Fault

BY MICHAEL B. OREN

TICKET LINES FOR movies are rare in Israel, and rarer still for features that have already been showing for five weeks, and unprecedented for a German production centered on the character of Adolf Hitler. Yet Israelis are still lining up to see Oliver Hirschbiegel's tenebrous docudrama about the Third Reich's closing days, *Der Untergang—The Downfall.*

The film, which has won several German awards and has been nominated for an Oscar, triggered nervous debate in Europe over its depiction of Hitler not as a one-dimensional monster but as a flesh-and-blood person, cruel and temperamental at times, but sympathetic and even fatherly at others. In Israel, where it is officially a crime to call a Jew a Nazi, the portrayal of the ultimate Nazi as anything less than demonic is bound to arouse controversy. But Israeli audiences have responded exuberantly, praising actor Bruno Ganz and his nuanced Hitler. Interviewed on Israeli television on Holocaust Memorial Day, Moshe Zimmermann—a historian who was once sued for comparing settler children to Hitler Youth—posited that this new, human Hitler served to demythologize Nazism and show how even normal people might be seduced by evil.

But Zimmermann thoroughly missed the point of the movie—as did most Israelis who saw the film. *The Downfall* is not about Hitler, human or otherwise, not about Nazism and evil. It is about letting Germany off the hook.

THE FILM OPENS in 1942, when the 22-year-old Traudl Junge is chosen by Hitler to be his personal secretary. The Führer is here seen as an affable man, crinkly-eyed and patient, even when Traudl fails at typing his dictation.

Fast-forward to late April 1945, and Germany is on the brink of collapse. The Russians have penetrated Berlin, and Hitler, his Nazi cronies, and his staff are locked in an underground bunker. The denizens of this lair are divided between Junker-type generals (such as Wilhelm Keitel, Alfred Jodl, and Wilhelm Mohnke), who know that the war is lost and want to surrender honorably, and deluded lackeys (such as Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels and Eva Braun, Hitler's paramour), who insist that nonexistent German armies can still turn the tide and ultimately save the Reich. Armaments Minister Albert Speer makes an appearance and sides with the generals, while Heinrich Himmler favors allying with the Americans against Russia. A tremulous Hitler wavers between these positions, alternatively despairing and defiant. And beside him throughout stands Traudl, who, though bereft of hope, refuses to abandon her Führer.

While focusing on this subterranean drama, the film veers off into two subplots, both set in the Bosch-scape of Berlin. The first features Ernst-Günter Schenck, a military doctor who ignores orders to abandon the city and remains to attend to its wounded. The second follows Peter Kranz, who, though only a boy, destroys two enemy tanks, while his father, a one-armed veteran, struggles to drag him from the battle.

The wickedness, the senselessness, the horror—all might have combined into soul-wrenching confession about a nation's descent into barbarity. But *The Downfall*, based largely on the self-expiating memoirs of Traudl and Speer, is concerned with exoneration, not penance, and realizes it through manipulation and deceit.

Take, for example, Traudl. She is the perfect ingénue: modest, demure, incapable of uttering an unkind or scatological word. Unsullied by ideology, she gapes incredulously every time Hitler makes an anti-Semitic remark. And, though she is played by the irresistible Alexandra Maria Lara, the Traudl character is portrayed as mostly sexless. She elicits not a single lascivious stare, much less a pinch, from any of the bunker's besotted officers. The real Traudl Junge, however, joined the Nazi League of German Girls at age 15 and was later elected to the elite Faith and Beauty society, whose members often mated with party stalwarts.

Other Nazis are similarly rehabilitated by the film. Ernst-Günter Schenck was an SS officer accused of performing experiments on prisoners at Mauthausen. Keitel and Jodl were both executed for war crimes—a fact mentioned just once before the closing credits—and Mohnke was charged with massacring Allied POWs. Speer, who is seen boldly ignoring Hitler's orders to destroy Germany's infrastructure, constructed his buildings with slave laborers. And the Wehrmacht, which is painted in such heroic colors that the audience cannot help but root for it, was complicit in countless atrocities.

What, *Gott in Himmel*, is going on here? Clearly, *The Downfall* is distinguishing between bad Germans (a small band of Nazis) and good (everyone else). The bunker's debauchery is contrasted with the suffering of simple Berliners, and Hitler's desire to destroy the German people for failing to win the war is compared with the army's determination to fight even though victory is impossible. The dusky lynch squads who hang Peter's father serve as a counterpoint to the fair-haired children who try to help others escape, and the ghoul-faced Goebbels is the reverse image of Traudl, who remains angelic even as she flees the city wearing an SS helmet.

The Downfall wants to demonstrate how the German

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people, too, were victimized by Nazism. If guilty at all, it is only of overwrought nationalism, of misplaced loyalty, or of just plain naïveté—anything but evil. Not even the Nazis are truly evil, only sick. They prefer to blow their brains out, or, like Goebbels's sociopathic wife, Magda, to poison their own children rather than let them live in a world without National Socialism. And, of all the Nazis, none is crazier—insane, not satanic—than Adolf Hitler.

Hitler's humanity, in fact, lasts for five minutes in the film's opening scene. Thereafter, he launches into a maelstrom of tirades, tantrums, and incoherent fits that culminate in his suicide. Since he is not a bad person, per se, but merely a lunatic, it follows that those who adored him were also unbalanced—temporarily, in the case of many Germans, terminally for the die-hard Nazis. By reducing the Third Reich to a limited dementia, *The Downfall* absolves the German people of any moral culpability for perpetrating World War II and destroying European Jewry. On the contrary, it casts them as heroic, even martyr-like. The movie closes with Traudl and the orphaned Peter Kranz together, cycling into the sunshine—the virgin and the golden-haired child, the progenitors of an immaculate Germany.

MOST OF THE Israelis who lined up for *The Downfall* were too focused on its multifaceted Führer to see this whitewashing. Others, yearning to be part of the New Europe, welcomed it. But the film is not meant for Israelis, nor even for Americans. Rather, its ideal viewers are twentysomething Germans who have made it the most popular film in their country's history. And understandably so, for they emerge from the theater convinced that their grandparents were valorous, victimized, and naïve, and that Germany can unreservedly take its place in a post-nationalist, post-psychotic Europe. They can enjoy watching the next generation of Germans play hide-and-seek around the abstract black cubes of Berlin's new Holocaust memorial, situated near the site of Hitler's bunker.

Though some movies open with a disclaimer, *The Downfall* ends with one. Statistics appear on the screen—"Fifty million people were killed in World War II, and six million Jews died in German concentration camps"—couched in soothingly passive verbs. Then, the real Traudl Junge, 80 years old but still handsome, asserts that she never once suspected the evil deeds committed by her mad ex-boss. But compare this ending with that of another movie, *Judgment at Nuremberg*, released in 1961. After deciding that four German judges on trial for war crimes were guilty merely by having participated in the Nazi system, American justice Dan Waywood (played by a wizened Spencer Tracy) declares, "If the defendants had been degraded perverts, if all the leaders of the Third Reich had been sadistic monsters and maniacs, then these events [the Holocaust] would have no more moral content than an earthquake." Perhaps *Der Untergang* should change its name to *Der Erdbeben*, *The Earthquake*. ■

Bush's problematic AIDS plan.

Wrong Dose

BY ADAM GRAHAM-SILVERMAN

TETE PROVINCE, MOZAMBIQUE

THE BOY IS ten years old, but he looks about five. For the past month, he has been taking antiretroviral drugs (ARVs)—medicinal cocktails that fight HIV—twice a day to keep the virus from attacking his body. He walks three miles on dirt or nonexistent roads to get to school and to pick up his pills. He brings similar drugs to his mother, who is recovering from HIV-induced tuberculosis and is too weak to stand or walk. The drugs work wonders, but the true miracle is that this family in the middle of nowhere has access to them.

The drugs the boy and his mother take are Indian-made generic versions of medicines still under patent in the United States. Mozambique's government, with the help of the William J. Clinton Foundation, worked out a deal to buy them at below-market prices. Once they enter the government's drug-procurement system in India, they travel hundreds of miles to the hospital in Tete, a provincial capital sandwiched between Malawi and Zimbabwe. From there, they make their way into the wilderness, thanks in large part to the international humanitarian group Doctors Without Borders and its network of nurses and community volunteers. But, of the 5.8 million people who need AIDS drugs worldwide, only about 700,000 receive them. Now, as part of President Bush's global AIDS initiative, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) is preparing to launch a system for purchasing AIDS drugs and delivering them to two million people by 2008.

The contract to run this new system, which could be awarded by the end of the summer, calls for the delivery of up to $7 billion in drugs and related services, which would make it the largest procurement contract in USAID's history. That has lured defense contractors, software firms, and shipping giants into awkward bidding partnerships with international nonprofit health and development groups. Privately, most health and development organizations admit that USAID's approach is not the ideal way to get drugs and other goods to far-flung, hard-hit parts of the world quickly and efficiently. They chafe at the contract's restrictions on buying cheap, generic drugs and fear duplicating existing work or undermining local efforts, such as those in Mozambique.

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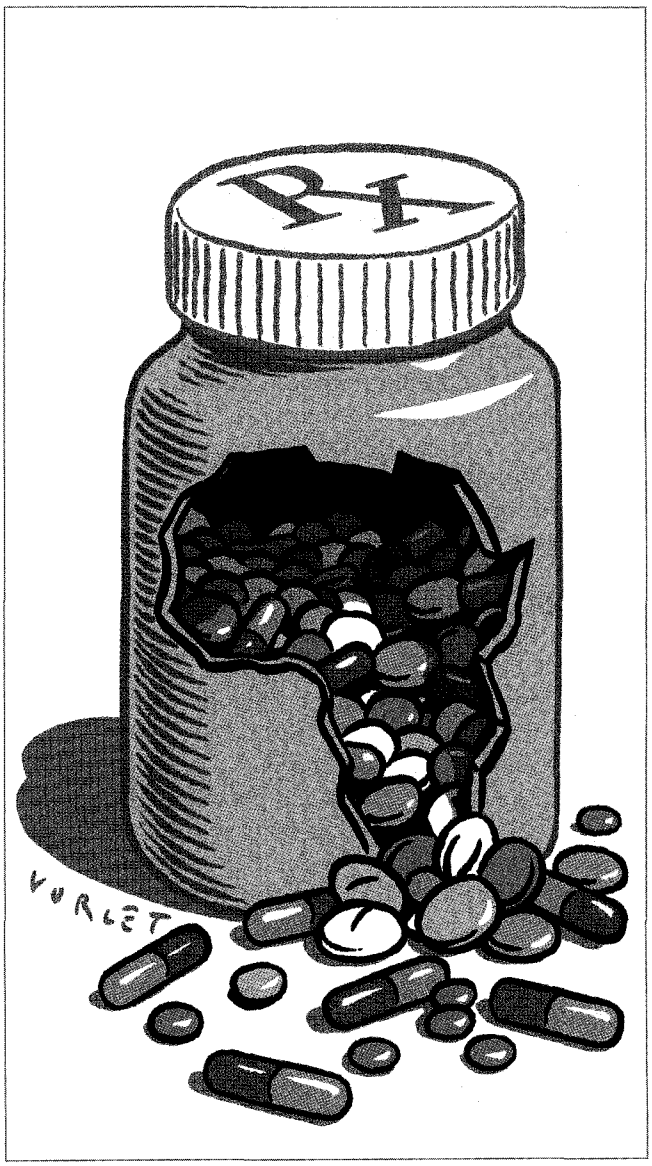
And yet, since the U.S. government is writing the checks, these nongovernmental agencies have put their reservations aside. Which is too bad, because, as it is structured, the USAID contract may do more harm than good.

WHOEVER WINS THE drug-management contract would set up a system to handle purchasing, shipment, storage, and delivery of ARVs and other medical supplies under Bush's "emergency plan" to fight AIDS. The 15 "focus countries" Bush's plan targets could use the entire system or just those pieces of it that suit their needs. At a minimum, the system would allow USAID to monitor drug purchases in each country. After the first two years, it could expand to more countries and open up to use by other organizations, such as the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria. USAID estimates it will pay the winner of the contract a total of $75 million to manage $500 million in goods for its first three years, with a ceiling of $7 billion in goods over the life of the contract (if all 15 countries used all its parts). The original deadline for bids was October 15, 2004, but drafts of the contract proposal were so riddled with problems that it was pushed back twice—eventually to February 16 of this year. USAID recently notified bidders that it was down to a handful of finalists, but no one in the government will say when the contract will be awarded.

USAID wants to create a model of drug management that can be expanded and copied broadly. But there are several problems with its proposal. For instance, while it talks about the need to work with local groups and build long-term capacity, there are few requirements that the winner actually do so. In fact, the contract provides little room for in-country staff, and it prohibits money from going to build or repair roads, railroads, ports, or other infrastructure that can be critical to drug delivery in the developing world. This approach makes adaptation to a diverse set of countries difficult. "In some places where there is already capacity to do procurement, there is the real possibility that this U.S. government–centralized system could displace—and so of course undermine—the ability to do procurement in the [local] public sector," says Rachel Cohen, the U.S. head of Doctors Without Borders's Campaign for Access to Essential Medicines. Mozambique, for example, already has its deal with Indian manufacturers. Or take Kenya, where a nonprofit, faith-based group buys and distributes ARVs to more than 1,000 clinics. In Botswana, a private partnership between the government, the drug giant Merck, and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has put 36,000 people on ARVs in the past two years.

Mark Dybul, the deputy U.S. global AIDS coordinator, says that, if countries think parts of the new USAID system will duplicate their own efforts, they will simply choose not to use them. "It is impossible for [duplication] to occur," he says. "The countries get to say, 'This is what we want.' We would never supplant a system." But critics note that a large U.S. presence may force governments or local groups to work with USAID's contractors. Moreover, USAID's attempt to build a system from scratch also overlaps with existing international efforts to build a comprehensive drug-management process. The Global Fund is developing its own procurement system, known as the Global Electronic Marketplace (GEM), in 138 countries. UNICEF has a similar system in 39 countries, through which it negotiates drug prices with 17 manufacturers. So does the International Dispensary Association (IDA), which supplies almost 200 countries. In fact, the United States already has a procurement system of its own through contractors John Snow Inc. and Management Sciences for Health, parts of which don't expire until September 2006. (The United States uses this system to procure condoms, which are not allowed to be distributed under the new contract. Several bidders said it would be easy to add condoms to the distribution system, but a government source overseeing the contract said they were excluded due to "political sensitivity"—in other words, because of concerns from conservatives that condoms encourage promis-



CHRISTOPHE VORLET

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cuity and that the plan should stress abstinence instead.)

Compared with existing delivery systems, the new USAID program would be more expensive and centrally operated, and, rather than give a country drugs to manage and thus build a local system, it envisions the ability to deliver ARVs directly to clinics within countries. USAID's insistence that countries can opt in once this system is built, and its demand for complete modularity—so that countries can pick and choose the components that they need—raises another question: How do you craft a bid for a system if you don't know who will use it? The difficulty of meeting such broad specifications has reduced the chances that the system ultimately built will be as efficient as possible. "All these contracts are going to have a huge amount of overhead and huge disbursement of money inside of Washington, as opposed to investing in systems that are up and running inside of countries or other international systems that could be improved on," says Paul Zeitz, executive director of the Global AIDS Alliance.

The contract would also more deeply cement a key barrier to wider use of ARVs: a requirement that the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approve any international generics distributed through it. The World Health Organization (WHO) already runs an approval system that most countries and international groups, such as the World Bank and UNICEF, support. But this wasn't good enough for the United States, which, citing concerns about drug safety, decided it needed its own approval process. In just over a year, the FDA has approved five drugs through an expedited review process, but none like the one-pill, twice-a-day regimen that the Mozambican boy uses. Most drugs purchased under U.S. programs are U.S. drugs still under patent—meaning they cost two to four times what generics do. "It's part of a continuing effort to keep generics out of the market and, at the same time, reward the multinational [drug companies]," says Bill Haddad, chairman of the International Association of Generic AIDS Manufacturers.

AND THESE ARE hardly the only problems with the USAID contract. Its size has led to the creation of some strange bidding alliances, but several groups have abandoned their bids after concluding that they couldn't make enough money from the contract. This, in turn, has raised doubts about the system's long-term viability and led some to question whether the contract will have to be restructured.

For example, Northrop Grumman, the nation's number-three defense contractor, formed a partnership with John Snow Inc. and Management Sciences for Health, but it dropped out just before the proposals were due in February. Though Northrop Grumman would not comment on its decision, several other large groups gave up after concluding there was little profit in the contract. Chemonics International, which works almost exclusively for USAID and is one the Agency's biggest contractors, initially did studies in each of the 15 target countries and put together a strong consortium without defense companies. "We were the consortium to beat—the face of development, not of defense. But we couldn't make money," says a member of that group, which also included Cardinal Health, UPS, and Oracle. (Like many people interviewed for this story, the source requested anonymity because the contract award is still pending.) The American Red Cross and Accenture are among others who looked at the contract but decided not to bid. Left in the hunt for the contract are two consortia, one led by IBM and the other by consulting firm BearingPoint.

One bid member said that $75 million is an arbitrary number that will make the work—and profit—impossible. It means the winner gets a flat fee, no matter whether the goods cost $500 million or $7 billion. Unlike some USAID contracts, the winner of this one can't charge a markup on drugs and supplies. "You're looking at some people who don't understand the size, scope, and complexity of this program or are setting it up for failure," the source says. Dybul says that USAID did its homework about the costs and that many bidders had no problem with the $75 million proposed payment.

To be sure, the program's critics all say that, despite their philosophical disagreements, they are reserving judgment until the contract is awarded and the specifics are revealed. Supply-chain management is a serious problem in developing countries, particularly now that the Bush initiative, the Global Fund, and other programs are pumping money into them. Several bidders and observers of the process credit USAID for its emphasis on accountability. "I need somebody to move stuff and to get stuff, and to get it to people who need it the most," says the government source overseeing the contract. "I don't care if Mary Poppins does it."

But, if developing countries are ever to stand on their own feet against AIDS or other threats, BearingPoint and Mary Poppins will not do. Working with UNICEF, IDA, or Global Fund systems would help ensure that individual countries retain local control and build local infrastructure. Limited technical support tailored to each country would bring along those who are far behind on drug delivery and fine-tune the efforts of those with some existing capacity. Also, it would have been better if the United States had agreed to WHO approval for generics instead of insisting on an FDA approval process that many African nations reject.

In 2004, the United Nations and many other international groups endorsed the "three ones," the idea that each country fighting AIDS should have a single plan of action, a single coordinating authority, and a single system to evaluate its efforts. In public, the United States strongly supports this idea, but the USAID contract would seem only to undermine it. If the new USAID system were in action now, odds are that the boy in Mozambique and his mother would not get ARVs. Or, if they did, the medicine would be part of a regimen requiring more pills. In an area without clocks or running water, chances are high that they would fail to follow it. It's something that this family, Mozambique, and the developing world shouldn't have to swallow. ■

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The greening of the Middle East.
Oil-for-Feud

BY JOSEPH BRAUDE

YOU'VE HEARD IT plenty of times: The Saudis are exporting Islamist militancy throughout the Middle East and beyond, and Americans are picking up the tab, with the $30 billion we spend annually on Saudi oil helping to finance fundamentalist mosques and madrassas. "We are financing both sides in the war on terrorism," observed Thomas L. Friedman in a March *New York Times* column. And we're doing so faster than ever, because oil now fetches nearly $60 a barrel—more than twice the pre–September 11 price. The only solution, experts say, is to spend less on fossil fuel and more on renewable energy—a double whammy of environmentalism and power politics that Friedman has dubbed the "geo-green strategy." Cutting dependence on foreign oil is "America's best weapon against terrorism," argues the Institute for the Analysis of Global Security (a hawkish think tank whose energy proposals have been backed by green groups like the Natural Resources Defense Council). The group says it would "invalidate the social contract between the leaders and their people and stem the flow of resources to the religious establishment."

Americans would do well to follow this advice. Burning less oil would protect the environment and could strengthen the economy, while the quest for viable alternatives would inspire a new generation of scientists and entrepreneurs. But, as a tactic for ending Saudi-sponsored militancy, the geo-green strategy won't work for the foreseeable future. Even if Americans dramatically reduced their spending on foreign oil, the ensuing void in Saudi coffers would readily be filled by new oil-starved customers to the east, notably China and India. Saudi Arabia and its clerical elite will remain rich, no matter how many Americans drive a Prius.

But that's only part of the problem. Worse is the fact that a growing number of Middle Eastern countries are themselves in line to become net oil importers—and they, too, will be buying from Saudi Arabia. This trend is bad news for Americans and good news for extremist Saudi clerics, because, in the Middle East, wherever oil flows, ideas tend to follow. Fortunately, there are remedies to the problem, such as deploying existing renewable-energy technologies to oil-poor Arab countries. Unfortunately, rather than adopt such an approach, the United States is standing on the sidelines while these countries *boost* their demand for oil—and bolster Saudi soft power and extremist Islamism in the process.

Joseph Braude is author of THE NEW IRAQ: REBUILDING THE COUNTRY FOR ITS PEOPLE, THE MIDDLE EAST, AND THE WORLD.

PETRODOLLARS BUY MORE political influence in the Middle East today than ever before, because there are fewer regimes that dole them out. Saddam's Iraq used to fund journalists, politicians, and terrorists in various Arab countries—it delivered pro-Iraqi rallies in Egypt and Jordan, assassinations in Lebanon and Syria, life insurance policies for suicide bombers in Palestine, and even an unsuccessful coup attempt in Mauritania in the late '90s. But those days are, of course, now over. In the 1980s and early '90s, Iran paid Islamists to destabilize the secular Arab governments in Tunisia, Algeria, and Egypt. But, after the Iran-Iraq war, the Iranian mullahs agreed to cease and desist in exchange for normalized relations with Arab rulers. Iran still supports Shia Islamists in Lebanon and Iraq and terrorism against Israel, but, for the most part, it has stopped meddling in Sunni Arab affairs. Oil-rich Libya, though always a wild card, is largely restrained from funding foreign mischief by its ruler's desire for détente with the Bush administration. All these changes leave aspiring Sunni firebrands with one place to grub for cash: Saudi Arabia.

The Saudis have exported ideology throughout the Middle East for decades. In the 1960s and 1970s, the Saudi monarchy was on the defensive against Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser's pan-Arab nationalism, which tried to persuade Arab societies to overthrow their dynasties and kings. In response, Saudi Arabia gave clerics money to spread a strident brand of Sunni puritanism that delegitimized Nasser's secular ideology—and secularism in general. This 20-year battle of ideas essentially ended in a draw: Arabism became the cult of most Arab regimes, but Saudi-backed Wahhabism became the ideology of many, if not most, Sunni mosques. In the '80s and '90s, the Saudi regime used the soft-power network it had built to go on the offensive, taking aim at the region's godless dissidents. These efforts largely worked: Socialists in Egypt lost ground to the Saudi-backed Muslim Brotherhood, and the Palestinian Liberation Organization lost ground to the Saudi-backed Hamas.

But, on September 11—roughly 40 years after Saudi money began to flood foreign mosques—bin Ladenism put the oil-rich kingdom back on the defensive. Ironically, bin Ladenism is a product of the brand of Islamic extremism preached in Saudi mosques in the '70s and '80s. Like Nasser, Osama bin Laden has taken aim at the legitimacy of Arab monarchs (beginning with those who rule his native Saudi Arabia), railing against their corruption and pro-Western tilt. By doing so, he has forced the kingdom back into the mosque-wooing business, at home as well as abroad. The Saudi government–backed Muslim World League and other clerical endowments continue to finance mosques and seminaries in every Arab country. While these mosques eschew outright incitement against Arab regimes, the message they propagate is bin Laden–like in the virulence of its denunciation of Western influence and ideals. The effect is to incubate intolerance and violence against Christians, Jews, and Americans.

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"Prosecutors make their careers playing a numbers game—and there's no better way to pad their stats than by relying on conspiracy charges."

Christopher Beresford Reynolds, a federal prisoner, writing in Legal Affairs

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Consider the case of Jordan, the country that spawned Iraq's Al Qaeda chief, Abu Musab Al Zarqawi. There's nothing appealing to Jordan's King Abdullah about the enormous influence Saudi radicals wield over many of his country's mosques. But Abdullah depends on Saudi Arabia for cheap, subsidized oil; he has none of his own. So there are limits to what he can do to stem the flow of Saudi soft power into his country. Hardly a friend of freedom and democracy, Jordan's king is increasingly viewed in Washington as a disappointment on the issue of political reform. If you're a secular liberal and want to start a national party in Amman, you're in for a rough fight. But, when Saudi-backed preachers play politics in the country's mosques—even, at times, campaigning against the king's own pro-Western policies—Abdullah suddenly shows off his tolerance for pluralism. At an April conference of the pro-Saudi Salafi movement in Amman, local and foreign preachers, including a guest from Saudi Arabia, spoke out against Jews, Christians, Shia, feminism, and globalization. Sheik Muhammad Nasr denounced the latter as a "scourge" and an "American-led plot to disrupt Muslim unity." These sentiments aren't exactly simpatico to an authoritarian state with a ubiquitous queen, a warm peace with Israel, a large urban Christian community, a Shia refugee population, and membership in the World Trade Organization. Yet the clerics who delivered these tirades were left alone by the government. When Jordanian Christian dissident Ali Hattar expressed similar anti-Western sentiments in December, however, he was persecuted by the secret police (see "Mad Hattar" by Dan Ephron, March 28). The difference? Salafi clerics are staunchly backed by Saudi Arabia, and Saudi Arabia is indispensable to the Jordanian economy.

Contrast Jordan with Tunisia, another authoritarian Arab state with a poor human rights record. Dissidents are no better off in Tunis than they are in Amman. But there's a key difference as far as the war on terrorism is concerned: In Tunis—which maintains a modest oil supply of its own and, until recently, was a net oil exporter—Saudi-style firebrands aren't tolerated. The leadership keeps close tabs on the messages emanating from its mosques and shows little patience with foreign meddling in the local Islamic culture. In 1995, the government went so far as to reengineer the curriculum of the historic Zaitouna Islamic seminary, introducing a new focus on coming to grips with modernity and teaching tolerance of Jews, Christians, and diverse schools of Islamic thought—a stark difference from the intolerance preached in Saudi-backed madrassas. The Tunisian state has been committed to fostering religious pluralism and secularism for decades—decades during which the country enjoyed energy independence, and hence political independence, from oil exporters to the east.

Unfortunately, many Arab countries are running low on oil, or running out of it entirely, while their populations grow and consumption habits swell. In short, the region is becoming more like Jordan and less like Tunisia—a boon for future Zarqawis, a blow to tolerance. There are no known oil reserves in Palestine or Lebanon. Syria, according to the U.S. government's Energy Information Administration, is due to exhaust its oil supply within the next ten years. Egypt's production has been steadily declining while its population has been skyrocketing; domestic demand for oil will outstrip production by—according to more bearish predictions—as early as 2010. In Yemen, a modest oil producer, domestic demand has been growing at the staggering rate of 9 percent annually. What all this means is that America's primary Arab targets for democratization are also increasingly vulnerable to Saudi-backed Wahhabi Islamization. And say what you will about Islam's potential to co-exist with democracy, there's no denying that Saudi-style Islamism abhors democracy. As Wahhabi preacher Muhammad Nasr said at the April powwow in Amman: "Islam is a nation of unity. Diversity is the slogan of the infidels. ... And party politics are the root cause of the weakness of the [Islamic] nation."

If you're an optimist, you can point out that oil dependency forecasts should always be taken with a grain of salt. A new refinery or two can significantly alter the calculations, and some of the increased demand from consumers at the pumps can be offset by replacing oil with natural gas to power a country's electric plants. Egypt, for example, is making such a transition now. These arguments would be reasonable in the West, but, in the Middle East, they are neutralized by several added factors.

First, the Middle East's demographic growth is incomparable to almost any other region of the world—its population is expected to double in 25 years. Second, not only is the number of automobile drivers growing; the size and gasoline consumption of the vehicles they drive are growing, too. Iran's automotive industry, which used to export matchbox-size cars to Syria and Yemen, now produces mainly midsize sedans and minivans, in addition to new fleets of minibuses and trucks. Nissan announced in April that its Cairo factory has begun to manufacture pickup trucks for local distribution and regional export, and, for the first time, the company will export SUVs to Egypt. Third, Arab governments—often under U.S. corporate tutelage—tend to favor roads over rail lines when drawing up transportation blueprints. Witness Morocco, whose highway traffic increased 18 percent between 2003 and 2004 and whose highway network is to be expanded from its current 550 kilometers to 1,500 kilometers by 2010. Apparently, the one American-style freedom Arab governments have concrete plans to establish is the freedom of the open road.

A CRUCIAL PART of combating the spread of Wahhabism is combating this growing thirst for oil. One might assume that efforts to reduce oil consumption wouldn't work in the Middle East; after all, in the United States, most environmentally friendly power plants are hydroelectric, and, obviously, water in the Middle East is scarce. But third-rate power sources in the United States happen to have first-rate potential in Arab countries: Where there's fierce desert wind, 300 days of sunlight per year, and natural hot springs, solar, wind, and

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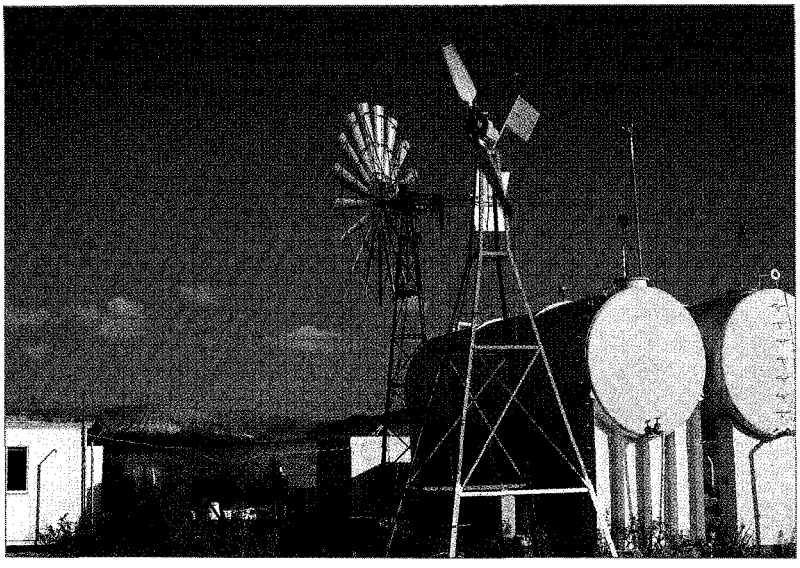

Wind powers this water-pumping plant in Jordan, a Saudi oil importer.

geothermal energy are a big deal. Just ask the new Center for Solar Energy in Yemen, which is agitating for money and resources to set up sun-powered facilities all over that country. "Almighty God," the Center reports, "has bestowed upon Yemen an abundant share of the quantity of solar energy. The solar energy that descends upon the [average] single square meter of Yemen is considered to be among the highest averages in the world." Or talk to the team of scientists from Beirut, Amman, and Damascus who came together last year to carry out an exhaustive assessment of wind, solar, and biomass technology applications in their three countries. The study found that their electricity demand had roughly doubled over the past ten years—a trend that is forecast to continue over the next ten years—and faulted the region's electricity production for being unnecessarily dependent on oil-fueled plants. "Renewable energy use in the three countries," the study argues, "will result in important savings of fossil fuels. ... Such savings would help limit the growth of energy imports and hence save on energy expenditures."

A common theme in the region's renewable energy projects is that they bring together countries that don't otherwise get along in pursuit of a constructive common agenda, giving them additional value. Last month, for example, Israel, the Palestinian Authority, and Jordan agreed to jointly study the possibility of building a canal linking the Red Sea to the Dead Sea that could power a desalination plant; the study will be funded by the World Bank. Alas, another thing these initiatives tend to have in common is the absence of the United States. Last year's Middle East & North Africa Renewable Energy Conference, held in Sanaa, Yemen, was jointly sponsored by the Yemeni government and the German Ministry of the Environment. Italy recently signed an agreement with Tunisia and Morocco to boost work on renewable energy as part of the Euromediterranean Space for Education and Research. A Greek initiative on alternative fuel sources for the Mediterranean basin brings together seven Arab states with France, Italy, Portugal, and Spain. These projects serve the ultimate goal of weaning Arab countries off fossil fuel, but they also pay dividends for their European members, by scoring goodwill and public diplomacy points in Arab countries. The U.S. government has the technical resources and expertise to join and even lead these ventures—yet, far too often, it is not involved at all.

One American who understands the strategic value of sharing U.S. energy innovation with Arab countries is Robert Freling, director of the Washington-based Solar Electric Light Fund. The group brings solar power, telephony, and Internet access to rural villages in the developing world. According to Freling, one of his ventures—a project in northern Nigeria that received funding from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)—was widely covered in the African press and led to further requests from Morocco, Egypt, Jordan, Syria, and Yemen, among other countries. But Freling says he has not been able to grant any of these requests, because USAID has declined to fund them.

The U.S. government should adopt a far-reaching plan to deploy these and other technologies to energy-poor Arab countries as part of a broader effort to stem the Middle East's growing dependency on Saudi largesse. Energy independence, though a distant vision for the United States, is a viable goal for much of the Arab world. In recognition of the link between freedom from oil and prospects for political reform, the State Department's Middle East Partnership Initiative should promote renewable energy. The Commerce Department should aggressively court renewable energy start-up companies—and adopt a policy of fostering their promotion in the Middle East. USAID should fund joint ventures between American and Arab scientists and entrepreneurs for wind and solar technology applications in sun-drenched desert environments. The Bush administration should help Arab governments phase out oil-fueled power plants in favor of natural gas and other alternatives. The White House should also push U.S. construction companies that do business in the Middle East, such as Halliburton, to urge Arab governments to build rails instead of roads. Needless to say, in all these endeavors, the United States should also lead by example.

To be sure, the flow of oil is not the only factor that affects the symbiotic relationship between Saudi Arabia and its less well-off Arab neighbors. But the energy dependence of Jordan and many of its neighbors has an appreciable political impact. Which is why the geo-green strategy to fight Islamic fundamentalism is a noble idea that won't work unless it is applied in Arab countries as well as at home. It is vital to U.S. interests that oil not be the Arab world's fuel of choice, lest Wahhabism become its ideology of choice. ■

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Reviving the social safety net.

Insurance Policy

BY JACOB S. HACKER

Christophe Vorlet

NEARLY A YEAR ago, voters following the presidential race heard a stirring call for social reform: "The times in which we work and live are changing dramatically. The workers of our parents' generation typically had one job, one skill, one career. ... And most of those workers were men. Today, workers change jobs, even careers, many times during their lives, and ... two-thirds of all moms also work outside the home." As a result, "many of our most fundamental systems—the tax code, health coverage, pension plans, worker training—were created for the world of yesterday, not tomorrow." These systems must now be transformed, the speaker concluded, so that "all citizens are equipped, prepared, and thus truly free" in the twenty-first century.

The orator was not John Kerry or John Edwards. It was George W. Bush, accepting the Republican nomination. And Bush was not calling for universal health insurance or expanded pension coverage—the seemingly obvious ways to repair "systems" built for the "world of yesterday." He was introducing his proposals for an "ownership society," the centerpiece of which, then and now, is overhauling Social Security to shift risks and costs onto the very workers most disadvantaged by the social and economic shifts of the last generation.

The contradiction is no accident. Bush and his allies recognize that the major domestic challenge of the twenty-first century is to give workers economic security in a transformed world. Just listen to conservative message guru Frank Luntz: "Every day, more Americans are concerned about their personal job security and their individual financial situation." Even as the president's drive to overhaul Social Security sinks into the political abyss, Bush has denounced critics of the effort for denying younger workers "the same sense of security that previous generations had when it came time for them to retire."

Yet, across the board, current Republican plans to tackle rising insecurity—from private accounts in Social Security to medical savings accounts to tax reform—promise one thing and do another. They promise to protect workers and their families against economic risk. What they will do is shift more risk onto Americans' already burdened shoulders. The conservative response to rising insecurity is equivalent to tossing a lead weight to a drowning man on the assumption that, now, he will *really* have an incentive to swim. It gets the problem right but the policies all wrong.

By contrast, Democrats are fighting the good fight on Social Security, successfully beating back the most vigorous assault the program has ever faced. Yet they find themselves completely unable to articulate a larger role for government that both justifies their opposition to the presi-

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dent's agenda and grounds a coherent alternative philosophy. Polls show that voters trust Democrats over Republicans on almost every domestic policy topic. But polls also show that most Americans don't think Democrats know what they stand for, while Republicans—even if their ideas aren't that popular—do.

The members of the party that brought us the nation's most popular and successful domestic program shouldn't be in this fix. The philosophy they need to respond to the new world of work and family lies just under their noses—in the now-almost-forgotten genesis of Social Security and the ideal of economic security that animated it.

As PETER BEINART has written in these pages ("A Fighting Faith," December 13, 2004), liberalism's "vital center" on foreign policy was forged in the crucible of the cold war. A similar—and just as intellectually important—story can be told with regard to liberalism on the domestic front. Yet the catalyst for *this* vital center was not the cold war. It was the Great Depression.

Although the Depression was a watershed in liberal thinking about the economy, there was nothing automatic about the reforms eventually embraced. Nor did the New Dealers simply dream up a coherent program once the scope of the disaster became clear. Instead, they drew on a wide range of often well-established ideas and precedents, guided by an abiding conviction: Capitalism needed to be "made good."

Making capitalism good implied many things: public employment, the taming of monopolies, relief for the destitute. Yet the most important ideal—and certainly the most enduring—was *insurance*. The word is familiar today, but, in the 1930s, it had a radical air. Insurance was an affirmation of free will over fate. If not an effort to stay the hand of God, it was an attempt to soften His blow. And it rested on modern actuarial science. The genius of insurance, especially when coupled with the power of the state to require participation, was that it could transform individual misfortunes into social costs distributed broadly across the citizenry. "Social insurance," as it came to be called, transformed the dislocations of modern capitalism into risks that could be managed and redistributed, rather than blows of fate that could only be feared and suffered.

Though radical in its assertion of human control, the insurance ideal was otherwise quite conservative. Insurance was about stabilizing capitalism, not stabbing it. It was about giving workers "a floor of protection," not a luxurious carpet of wealth. The executive director of Franklin Roosevelt's Committee on Economic Security noted proudly that "only to a very minor degree does [the Social Security Act] modify the distribution of wealth, and it does not alter at all the fundamentals of our capitalistic and individualist economy."

The insurance ideal calls for neither tight economic regulation nor massive redistribution, and, in that sense, it is conservative. Yet it is also eminently progressive. Economic security, after all, is something the affluent take for granted. Social insurance extends such guarantees to those least capable of obtaining them on their own—namely, those with limited means or a high probability of needing assistance. FDR put it best in 1938: "We must face the fact that, in this country, we have a rich man's security and a poor man's security, and that the government owes equal obligations to both. National security is not a half-and-half matter: It is all or none."

As Roosevelt's words suggest, national security was always seen by New Dealers as having both a domestic and a foreign component. Indeed, foreign threats made security at home even more vital. War meant shared sacrifice and shared fate. There could be no "rich man's security" when poor and rich were fighting beside each other, no "rich man's security" when the fates of all citizens were so intertwined.

TODAY, THE IDEAL of economic security seems dated to many. But the exact opposite is true. The big economic trends of the past 30 years—deregulation, deindustrialization, increased foreign competition, the decline of unions, the transformation of the family from single breadwinners into two-earners balancing work and kids—have all created powerful new forces pushing toward increased insecurity. Americans are richer than they were a generation ago. But they are also facing much more dramatic swings in their income, as I have argued before in these pages ("False Positive," August 16, 2004). Over the past decade, moreover, insecurity has moved up the economic ladder. Increasingly, educated middle-class Americans are riding the economic roller coaster once reserved for the working poor.

The signs of this transformation are hard to miss. Forty-five million Americans lack health insurance, up more than six million from 2000. One and a half million file for bankruptcy each year, roughly half of them because of medical crises. Traditional guaranteed pensions are all but gone. Now, workers lucky enough to get a pension rely on so-called defined-contribution plans that place the investment risk on them. And, while unemployment is low, the job market is more uncertain.

Government and corporate policies have mostly exacerbated, rather than countered, this great risk shift. Employment-based benefits have been in steep decline for more than two decades, particularly for low-wage workers. Meanwhile, public social programs leave growing gaps. Overwhelmingly focused on the aged, they leave out key protections for the long-term unemployed and medically uninsured, as well as those who suffer permanent income loss after their skills become obsolete. They are not always friendly to part-time and contingent workers or the self-

Jacob S. Hacker, a Yale political scientist and fellow at the New America Foundation, is completing a book on economic insecurity, THE GREAT RISK SHIFT.

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employed. And they do little to help families balance work and child-rearing. All of which means that the intensified risks of the post-'70s era have been borne mostly by working Americans and their families.

Against this backdrop, it's little wonder Americans remain so pessimistic about the economy. President Bush keeps saying the "economy is strong, and it's getting stronger." But Americans don't believe it. Unfortunately, Americans also don't believe that government can effectively address the problem of rising insecurity. In a recent series of focus groups, the Economic Policy Institute (EPI) found that middle-class Americans "believe traditional relationships that formerly provided some security are disappearing." Yet they also believe that "government is corrupt and neither trustworthy nor a source of solutions." The middle-class response to rising insecurity, according to the EPI's focus groups, is blunt and resigned: "It's up to me."

All of which suggests that there may well be a method to the madness of Bush's calls for an "ownership society." The Republican agenda is to replace existing protections with highly individualized private accounts and then let the chips fall where they may. This strategy may help the affluent and fortunate, but it won't provide strong guarantees of economic security to most Americans. A recent analysis by Yale economist Robert Shiller drives this home, predicting that nearly 50 percent of Americans who opt into private Social Security accounts based on the formula recommended by Bush's Commission to Strengthen Social Security would fail to break even, while the tenth of account holders who are least fortunate would lose around $50,000 in net retirement wealth.

Yet, while the ownership society can't guarantee economic security, it fits perfectly with the idea that "it's up to me"—that Americans are on their own in the new world of work and family. And, the more Americans believe that, the more likely it is that they will support conservative politicians who want to shift even more risk onto their shoulders. Call it the vicious cycle of insecurity—if Americans feel no one can help them, they will back leaders who won't. In the '30s, Democrats saw economic security as the keystone of a broad coalition in support of their party. Today, Republicans appear to see economic *insecurity* in much the same way.

ECONOMIC SECURITY RESONATES with Americans for a simple reason: It matters to *them*, to *their* families, to *their* pocketbooks. Fairly or unfairly, liberalism came to be seen as a great campaign on behalf of the other: the poor, the disenfranchised, the marginalized minority. This was a sinister caricature grounded in a shining truth: Liberalism did stand up for the dispossessed in the great civil rights struggles of the 1960s. But, as a guide to liberalism's achievements in domestic policy, it was a smear—and an ironic one—because the ideal of economic security purposefully avoided the differences of race and culture that ultimately helped tar it.

Today, however, there is little need to choose between alternative frames. Economic security is something vital for all Americans. There is no core group that is comfortably secure, while a marginalized "other" peers in from the outside. To the contrary, the vast majority of Americans—black and white, poor and middle class—are now in the same turbulent sea of economic uncertainty. The sociologist Mark Rank has estimated that more than half of *white* Americans will spend at least a year below the poverty line by the time they are 75 (the results are not materially changed by excluding college students). For most, the time spent poor will be short, but it will be unpleasant, unwelcome, and often unavoidable—a result of one of the routine but wrenching events that commonly push people over the brink: ill health, divorce, a death in the family, loss of employment. The problem of insecurity is not the problem of persistent poverty. It is the problem of often devastating hardships that can strike almost all of us. When it comes to events like these, shared insurance isn't something we do for others; it is something we do for ourselves and our families that we cannot do alone.

This is one reason why social insurance gives more to those who contribute more (while still favoring those with low earnings and those who experience economic crises). Critics of social insurance deride payments to the nonpoor as a form of political bribery. But insurance is not relief. It is meant to protect standards of living, to keep families from approaching poverty's frightening gates. Bush's newly favored idea of "progressive indexation" within Social Security, in which the benefits of poor workers hold steady while those of middle-income workers are sharply cut, threatens the whole bargain. The message is that economic security isn't for families trying to get ahead; it's for those stuck at the bottom.

And that's exactly the wrong message. Economic security is a cornerstone of economic opportunity, and the common treatment of the two ends as antithetical could not be more mistaken. Like businesses, people invest in the future when they have basic protection against the downside risks of their choices. Excessive fear of loss thwarts, rather than promotes, advancement by encouraging people to take individually rational, but collectively suboptimal, steps to protect themselves. The worker who fears downsizing at any moment may work harder for a time. But, in the long run, insecure workers tend to underinvest in specialized training; they are more reluctant to change jobs; they try to minimize their sense of job commitment to protect themselves against psychological loss. And, of course, none of these costs include the huge emotional and economic losses that fall on workers and their families when they lose their prime source of income and self-worth and are left without a lifeline.

Americans seem to understand this. Students of public opinion have long marveled at Americans' seemingly inconsistent celebration of government insurance programs, on the one hand and the ethic of rugged individualism on

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the other. Americans are "operational liberals" and "philosophical conservatives," public opinion analysts Lloyd Free and Hadley Cantril once argued. They want to have their welfare-state cake and eat their free-market capitalism, too. But why not? If Americans are to be encouraged to invest in new skills, strong families, new jobs, and everything else that makes upward mobility possible, we need a bigger umbrella of basic insurance, not a smaller and more tattered one. Back in 2003, Bush's Economic Report of the President said that it was the job of government to provide "the economic environment in which risk-takers and entrepreneurs create jobs." Apparently, Bush thinks the only folks taking economic risks are the well-off and corporations, not ordinary Americans.

STILL, BUSH WAS right when he suggested, in his 2004 convention speech, that the systems that provide security and opportunity were "created for the world of yesterday, not tomorrow." Insecurity is still very much with us. But its nature and causes have changed dramatically—and in ways that are not always well-recognized. Even as working women became the norm, the special strains faced by two-earner families were largely neglected. So, too, were the distinctive unemployment patterns that became increasingly prevalent as industrial jobs gave way to service work and workers' skills required more frequent updating.

In the new world of work and family, the emphasis should be on portable insurance to help families deal with temporary interruptions to income and big blows to household wealth. And these insurance protections should be mostly separate from work for a particular employer, sponsored either by government or private communal associations. By the same token, we should not let massive social risks be borne by Band-Aid institutions that do not distribute those risks broadly or efficiently. Bankruptcy should not be a backdoor social insurance system; private charity care should not be our main medical safety net; early retirement and disability programs shouldn't be a way of simply shedding older workers—and not because these systems are prone to abuse, but because they were not designed to bear the burden they now carry, much less to carry it effectively or equitably.

The concrete ideas for achieving these goals will have to be thought through at length, of course. Yet the details should not be allowed to upstage the aspiration. There is no shortage of plans to expand insurance; I have tried to peddle a few myself. But, though plans abound, their advocates have largely failed to develop a compelling logic that unites them under a common umbrella and ties them to practical politics. The need for economic security in the new world of work and family is such a logic, and it is one that could unify a wide range of forces behind a new Democratic agenda.

In May, the Pew Research Center released its "political typology" survey for 2005. Perhaps the most telling finding was that two groups of Republican-leaning voters identified by Pew, each representing one-tenth of the electorate, depart sharply from the anti-government line of the party's affluent backers. These voters (which Pew labels "pro-government conservatives" and "disaffecteds") aren't hard-core social conservatives, though many are deeply religious; they're mostly middle-class white men and women with less than a college degree. And what's most striking about these voters is how strongly they support public guarantees of economic security. By two-to-one majorities, they endorse government-guaranteed health insurance. Virtually all want the minimum wage raised. Most want government to help the needy. Democrats have been spinning themselves in circles trying to lessen such voters' animosity on foreign policy. They might do better to give them what they want on economic policy.

"New ideas" are not enough. What is needed is a morally grounded call for a new social contract in which government helps Americans who "work hard and play by the rules"—in Bill Clinton's memorable phraseology—to deal with the pressing economic risks of the twenty-first century. The debate over Social Security is the place to begin the battle. Yet, even here, the Democrats have too often let the technical outshine the moral, and they may soon lack the plump target that the president's flawed Social Security reform plan has come to represent. If Democrats want to seize the high ground, they need their own clear vision of an "insurance and opportunity society"—a vision that challenges the massive shift of risk onto families and promises the security needed for true advancement.

Denouncing Republicans' ethical and procedural abuses is not enough either. Republicans certainly deserve the charges. But the conceit that it was complaints like these that paved the way for the Republican capture of Congress in 1994 misses the larger lesson of the GOP takeover. Newt Gingrich and his fellow insurgents weren't afraid to cry corruption or criticize abuses. Yet their cries were animated by a single big idea—that government had run amok, trampling commerce, freedom, and Americans' pocketbooks.

The Gingrich revolutionaries soon faltered, of course. But it's now clear that their efforts sowed the seeds for the GOP's aggressive exercise of power today. Those seeds were ideological and organizational; they consisted of ideas linked to institutions and were pushed to the top of the political agenda by an increasingly coordinated party. Democrats are not going to build a comparable movement overnight. But, if any political fight presents an opportunity to begin the difficult work of reforging a majority political coalition on favored Democratic terrain, it is the fight over economic security.

In 1938, when he called for national security for all, FDR described insecurity as the nation's last great frontier, setting the agenda for his party for the next three decades. Today, however, the frontier of insecurity is closing back in. As Bush's troubles on Social Security show, Americans are not yet ready to give up on the ideal of shared fate. Let us hope that Democrats are not either. ■

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BOOKS & THE ARTS

STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS

Foolery and Factory

IT TAKES TEN MINUTES OR SO FOR irritation to be chased by a smile. **MR. AND MRS. SMITH** comes on like James Bond in America, now married to a Jane Bond, which is not a scintillating prospect. First, in an attempt at novelty, we see the Smiths seated in easy chairs facing us, discussing marital problems with an invisible marriage counselor, problems arising from their professional rivalry as secret agents. (We never get specifics about their employers.) Then, to illustrate, the film lurches into action of the usual impossible and silly Bond type. Both Smiths apparently have the license to kill, and each is outfitted with enough gadgetry to make any high school kid gape. The first reaction to all this: do we really need more Bond spin-offs? The originals are much more than enough. We wish the projectionist had a fast-forward button.

MR. AND MRS. SMITH
(Twentieth-Century Fox)

A DECENT FACTORY
(First Run/Icarus)

Then we begin to see why the film exists. It's a parody. The action and the mechanical gimmickry themselves don't tip the hand: what has ever been credible about Bond? But the exaggerations of *Mr. and Mrs. Smith* serve as commentary on the whole shebang. For instance, early in the picture, after a marital quarrel, Mister is on foot, chasing Missus, who is driving away. He calls after her, as if they were having a kitchen spat, "We must talk," just as we see her car sail over a hedge. Or right after an elevator crashes and burns at a construction site, we see a billboard for United Fried Chicken. Or this couple who live in a comfy suburban house on a dozy street have a fierce battle at home trying to kill each other with massive machine guns, destroying crockery and furniture and walls, and after all this tumult has gone on for a while, the doorbell rings and neighbors in their pajamas ask amiably if anything is wrong. Mister and Missus, somewhat reconciled, smile cozy suburban smiles and, masking any view of the interior, assure their neighbors that everything is fine. One more instance: in a fight with enemies of some stripe, one of them throws a large knife that plunges into Mr. Smith's thigh. He glances down, extracts the knife casually, throws it away, and goes on fighting.

The screenplay is by Simon Kinberg; the director was Doug Liman, who did well with the non-comic *Bourne Identity*; and the married pair are Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie. Kinberg's script is nicely studded with the impossible treated as domestic commonplace, but the stars have not quite caught the parodic tone that the script needs, which is why it takes us a while to catch on. The fact that Pitt and Jolie have not been associated with this type of action is something of a help, but what was needed was the off-balance tickle that—to fantasize—Cary Grant and Rosalind Russell would have given it.

A documentary called **A DECENT FACTORY** takes a revealing look at the conditions that inspectors find in a huge plant where hundreds of employees, mainly young women, make electronic parts. The factory is in China, the owners are German, the factory is making parts for a Finnish plant, one of the inspectors is an English woman, and the film was made by a French director. Thus there are several avenues of interest, and of course the tidy quality of the film itself is the chief one.

The Nokia Corporation, we are told, is the world's largest manufacturer of mobile phones, with fifty thousand employees—including subcontractors, I assume—in fifty countries. Nokia's headquarters are in Finland, and the film begins at a conference there. The discussion is on the subject of ethics in Nokia's treatment of workers, and there is—not uncommon these days—an ethicist on the company's staff, a Finnish woman. For a special job she is joined by an Englishwoman who is described as a specialist in corporate ethics.

The bulk of the film was shot in a large Chinese factory. This business is apparently separately owned, but its work is to manufacture parts for Nokia. As the two women see, this factory is no dim and dingy sweatshop. It is large, airy, well-lit, and very clean. The only immediately distressing aspect of the place is the appalling noise made by machines in some sections of the plant. The two women ask their guide, a European who speaks English and is a junior boss, whether anything can be done about it: he shows them ear pads that are available but which the workers there don't often use. The implication is that these people get used to the enveloping roar.

The plant has extensive dormitories with separate quarters for men and women. (The few married couples are permitted conjugal visits.) Most of the rooms accommodate eight people in tiered bunks. The inspectors are permitted to interview some of the women privately, on camera. The bosses evidently think the resulting film is going to be a sort of training video, which is presumably why the director, Thomas Balmès, and his crew were admitted. When management learns that the film was commissioned by television companies and that it is destined for broadcast, there is discomfort. We are not told if the film was censored by the factory owners, but it certainly doesn't seem constricted.

As far as the workers' comments are concerned, the only complaint we hear is about the food, which they find poor. They often slip out at night to buy food. And one woman reports a fight that another of the women had with a rough-tongued female supervisor. The one true grievance we do not hear from any of the women: we learn it from one of the bosses in a matter-of-fact way. The average pay is only about half the legal minimum

continued on page 27

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WHAT IS NEXT FOR THE PENSIONS OF AMERICAN WORKERS?

From changes in interest rates to risky investments, avoid pension land mines

On June 9, 2005, *The New Republic* convened a symposium of experts on pension reform that examined the troubles facing the U.S. government's Pension Benefit Guaranty Corp. and the tremendous growth of 401(k) plans. Panelists also measured the pros and cons of defined-benefit and defined-contribution systems and discussed the impact of Social Security on today's workers. The following is an edited transcript:

THE PANEL

DOUG ELLIOTT
Founder,
The Center on Federal Financial Institutions

KENT SMETTERS
Associate Professor,
The Wharton School,
University of Pennsylvania

DAVID CERTNER
Director,
Federal Affairs Department,
AARP

CHRISTIAN WELLER
Senior Economist,
The Center for American Progress

MODERATED BY

NOAM SCHEIBER
Senior Editor,
The New Republic

NOAM SCHEIBER: Obviously, pension reform is a pretty big topic. It has all sorts of implications in the corporate world and the public-policy world. So let me start, if I could, with Doug Elliott. I think it's helpful to begin the discussion by looking a bit at the PBGC. We obviously have this transformation of the pension system in the private sector from "defined benefit" to "defined contribution." I think we can all agree that there's no way around that. The defined-benefit system probably wasn't sustainable, but obviously the transitions are killers. And that's where the PBGC comes in. If you could just sort of take us through where we are in that transition, and as a result what the strains are on the [PBGC].

DOUG ELLIOTT: I don't know that I would subscribe to the comment that it's inevitable that the defined-benefit system will go away. It's clearly the direction things are heading, I would concur with that. I think the underlying problem with the traditional defined-benefit system is that employees don't tend to value it until they're [approximately] age 55. It's clear that Americans don't think about retirement until they have to, so there's a certain myopia as to what the rest of their lives will look like. But I also [believe] we have an extremely opaque system with the defined-benefit system.

The defined-benefit system is the type of pension plan that we think of as [a] traditional pension plan — the ones where a corporation [sends] you a check for a fixed amount every year as long as you live. And that's a system [that] has real policy advantages. It provides a great deal of security to employees because it takes away the investment risk. They'll get the same check whether or not the stock market does well. And it also takes away the longevity risk. You get the same check, whether you live to 70 or you live to 120. You keep getting [checks] as long as you're still with us. Those are profound public-policy advantages.

There are people who might choose to trade that security away and take their chances with a defined-contribution system, but there are many people who would prefer not to have those risks themselves. There's nothing inherently unstable or unworkable about that type of system. It really represents a pooling of the risks. You take the investment risk and longevity risk and you pool them — in this case generally — into the pension plan of a very large corporation. The problem is, the way we've got things set up makes it opaque, not terribly interesting, and introduces some additional risk for younger people.

One reason people are so focused on pension reform right now is because we have an agency, the [PBGC], which guarantees that if a corporate pension plan doesn't have enough money to pay its promises — [and] the company sponsoring it goes broke — the PBGC will step in and protect the employees. It's not absolute protection. The airline pilots are the poster child for the fact that some people do get harmed even with this protection because there are caps on how much people can receive — $45,613 a year, if you retire at age 65, is the most that [the] PBGC will pay you. There are pilots who would have made $100,000 a year as pension, so some have been cut back sharply. But the large majority of employees do in fact get fully protected by the PBGC.

The problem is [that] the PBGC doesn't actually have the money to pay all this. Right now, the PBGC has a $23 billion deficit. The cash [may] actually run out in 2021 and pensioners would receive just pennies on the dollar. Essentially, grandma and grandpa would have their [PBGC] pension check [bounce]. There will be a taxpayer rescue if we get that far. The amount of

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that rescue, if nothing changes, is [approximately] $78 billion. It would be the second-biggest bailout in federal history, after the savings & loan bailout.

MODERATOR: To what degree is the decline of the defined-benefit system inevitable, [and] to what degree has it been encouraged by public-policy decisions? And if the decline of the defined-benefit system is inevitable in the private sector, what does that mean for the way we might think about Social Security and publicly provided pensions?

KENT SMETTERS: What we call "defined contributions" are like the new 401(k) systems, IRAs, where you put your own money in. It's therefore subject to market risk. You really have to stay with the same company your entire working life in order to get the full benefit. In other words, if you had changed your job two or three times, which is very common nowadays, and you summed up the defined benefits that you would get across three companies, and compared it with the defined benefit that you would get from staying with the same company, you would actually do worse with the three companies. Because your wages grow [during] your career, you have [an] incentive to stay in. So this is known as the job lock-in effect.

The job lock-in effect of the defined-benefit systems made sense many years ago because most of the training that people got was on-the-job; it was not in the formal education market. [So] there basically was this implicit trade. The employer would make [an] investment [in] you, but [they didn't] want you leaving [them], so [they would] lock you in with this defined benefit that gives you lots of incentive to stay and not leave. There was [a] repayment for their investment, and job lock-in made a lot of sense. But as the education system switched over to more formal education, that lock-in effect [didn't] make sense, so it was actually workers who [didn't] want [defined-benefit] plans. They want defined-contribution plans, which are fully portable across employers.

In theory, defined-benefit plans throughout the United States were supposed to be fully funded, and so there should be no transition costs of switching over to 401(k) plans, if you were actually allowed to do it. The problem is that the PBGC creates a great incentive for employers to basically game the system because employers are not penalized correctly if they underfund their pension plan [or] if they take excessive risk in their portfolio. So the problems the PBGC faces today is due to lousy government policy and the fact that employers are very rational and they know how to take advantage of this.

MODERATOR: I imagine we're still a number of years [away] from the point where more people are relying on defined-contribution plans than traditional pension plans, but I imagine that's beginning to change among [AARP's] membership. Where are we in that transition process?

DAVID CERTNER: You've seen this tremendous growth in 401(k) plans, yet we have not really been through a cycle to see if these things actually work or how they work, because we haven't really [come] to the end of a generation yet with 401(k) plans. We're starting to get there and the numbers — as people have been looking at them — are not very encouraging because you've got to do a lot of things right with your 401(k) plan at many steps along the way. We've seen this dramatic shift in pension coverage from defined-benefit to defined-contribution plans over the last three decades. But we've really seen no change in total pension coverage. Pension coverage is roughly the same — [approximately] half of the workforce. So we really don't have more people getting pensions, just a different kind of pension.

David Certner:
"WE SEE THAT SOCIAL SECURITY IS GOING TO CONTINUE TO BE POTENTIALLY EVEN MORE IMPORTANT IN THE FUTURE THAN IT IS TODAY."

So if you're on your 401(k) plan, what are the pitfalls you face? If you have one, you've got to contribute, and that distinguishes it very often from a defined-benefit plan where the employer is contributing on your behalf. Once you contribute, you've got to invest well. You've got to be the one who understands and knows how to invest. And at a very basic level, it just means having a diversified portfolio — [but] a lot of people don't understand what that means.

Then you've got the problem of [changing] jobs. [For] defined-contribution or 401(k) plans, which are designed to cash out this money, you've got to make a decision. What are you going to do with that money that gets cashed out? And we see repeatedly that — particularly if you're younger and if [there are] smaller amounts — money tends to get spent and not saved or rolled over. If all you're going to do is cash them out in the earlier years, you're going to lose the substantial value that you could have gotten from your defined-contribution plan.

We see increasing reliance on Social Security in retirement, not [a] reduced reliance. When you ask somebody what they think they're going to rely on [during their retirement], Social Security falls at the bottom, and when they actually [retire], Social Security is still at the top. We see that Social Security is going to continue to be potentially even more important in the future than it is today, and I think this is going to be a fundamental problem that we're wrestling with as we go through this new change in the pension format.

CHRISTIAN WELLER: I think when it comes to retirement income, it's a question of getting the mix right — the mix between a guaranteed benefit and some risk [and] the give between a public insurance system, such as Social Security, and private equities. You've got to remember [that there are] 44 million people right now who will receive, or can expect to receive, some benefits from [defined-benefit] plans. Thirty-four million are under single-employer plans, [and] the other 10 million [are] under multi-employer plans, which have many advantages over single-employer plans.

We're now seeing this big discussion [about defined-benefit] plans because we have seen this massive shortfall that is due to economic trends [and] had nothing to do with companies mismanaging [their funds]. In particular, we saw massive declines due to the stock market and because interest rates fell sharply, which meant the liabilities of pension plans rose and the interest rates haven't changed much. You see interest

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rates falling every time [during] a recession and stock growth declining just prior to a recession. And just the size of this phenomenon was much larger than any of the previous ones. So you have the cyclicality that always makes it harder for employers. The demands from the pension plans are rising in the middle of a recession, and that's certainly something we need to address. It certainly makes it harder for them to honor the promises of the defined benefit of the traditional pension plans.

You've got to change the tax incentives for people to save. Right now, we're showering most of the tax incentives [on] people who already save enough. That upside-down incentive structure can be changed. We can get flat incentives, [such as] a flat refundable tax credit of 25 percent. So everybody [would receive] 25 cents on the dollar that they contribute to a defined-contribution plan. That's a big improvement over what we have right now.

We [also] can give higher matching contributions to lower-income earners than to higher-income earners. Clearly, that costs money. It costs less than what we're doing right now and it certainly would help us to improve private savings for lower-income earners.

MODERATOR: To what extent are problems in pension funding and pension liabilities cyclical, and to what extent are they sort of structural? Interest rates have been pretty low for a couple of years now; the market has been pretty middling in terms of returns [during] the last few years. How much of this is just a function of the downturn in the economy and the financial markets that just wasn't necessarily foreseen?

ELLIOTT: I think there is a myth that most of what's going on here is cyclical. The PBGC situation has both cyclical and structural elements, but [there] clearly [are] major structural problems. Every academic study that has looked at the risk that is being passed on to the PBGC that has tried to determine what the break-even premium level would be has shown that the premiums that are being charged are at best half of what they would need to be for [the] PBGC to be self-supporting. And that's not a function of how things look today, that's looking at what the volatility is of investment returns in a pension fund and what the probability is of companies going broke over time. So there's clearly a structural problem there.

There is an incentive for companies to try to persuade the unions to substitute pension increases for wage increases that would cost cash. And the unions have an economic incentive to say "yes," even if they think the company may go broke. The reason they have that incentive is because if they get a significant pension increase and the company goes broke in a couple of years, a big chunk of that will be picked up by the PBGC for the rest of their employees' lives. It is basically passing the risk and the cost onto what I [believe] will ultimately be the taxpayer.

MODERATOR: To what extent are people always going to be surprised by downturns and form their expectations [during] upturns?

Kent Smetters:
"THE FACT THAT SO MANY HOUSEHOLDS ARE DEPENDENT ON SOCIAL SECURITY IS BECAUSE IT IS A SELF-FULFILLING PROPHESY; IT IS BECAUSE SOCIAL SECURITY EXISTS."

SMETTERS: [That brings] us to two dimensions on what you mean by "people." One is the "plan manager"; the other one is the "planned participant." In terms of the plan managers, I just want to emphasize something that Doug pointed out, that it is both structural and cyclical. But even [during] the cyclical part when the asset values of these pension plans went down, even that is caused in large part by the PBGC rules being kind of screwed up — in particular, not having proper risk-based pricing.

And what happens is that the companies have a lot of incentive to divest their pension plan's inequities. And, in fact, that is completely the wrong investment strategy; they should be liability-asset matching and basically invested in bonds because their promises are basically low-risk; they should have low-risk investments. But the PBGC rolls encourage them to go for broke. Why? Because they can make their contributions smaller in expected values and the PBGC picks up the tab.

Social Security itself is what crowds lots of personal saving. And so, if we actually move toward a plan with funded accounts and things like that, we would actually increase household savings. So the fact that so many households are dependent on Social Security is because it is a self-fulfilling prophesy; it is because Social Security exists.

In portfolio allocation, I agree that it requires a lot more thought in terms of households. And that is why smart plans have a couple of features to them. First of all, they have opt-in instead of opt-out. The reason why you don't see more 401(k) plans with opt-in today in the [United States] is because of liability reasons. If you opt-in your worker to some personal account — [such as] a 401(k) — and the performance is bad, then you could be legally liable as an employer if the account values go down because you have taken some of their money and you have decreased their returns. That is also why the few employers that do have automatic opt-in, they always put you in some low-risk money market because if they put you in some blended reasonable portfolio and that went down, they would be legally liable; the trial lawyers would go crazy. And so a good plan would have opt-in with legal protection to protect employers who make fiduciary and prudent choices about the contribution level, as well as the portfolio that people choose.

Economists are overwhelmingly supportive on one point, and that is we have to evaluate the value of pension-plan liabilities and assets on a market-to-market basis. That is, you cannot do this "smoothing approach." The smoothing approach creates a tremendous moral hazard. You cannot have your pension plan unfunded today with this idea of, "Don't worry, we'll catch up during good times in the future."

The idea that you can do accounting assuming that you'll be in business creates just tremendous moral hazards and it also leads to completely flawed accounting. US Airways is a good example. Just months before they terminated their pension plan, they claimed it was almost 90 percent funded. Why? Because they were allowed to use

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the smoothing approach. So the ministration basically says you have to mark the asset values to the current market price, and that is the way every economist would say you have to do this.

MODERATOR: Christian, you seem to have faith maybe more than most of the other people on the panel that the defined-benefit system isn't necessarily a relic, that we can still continue some form of the system going forward. When you look to the future in your fantasies about what you would want to see as a pension system, what share would savings on the part of the individual play? How would it all fit together?

WELLER: It really is a matter of mixing risks and returns safely. I believe [defined-benefit] plans should play a substantial role. Maybe half of all retirement income outside of Social Security should come from [defined-benefit] plans, maybe even more. The question [is,] should we go with the single-employer plans, or are we better off with some sort of multi- or multiple-employer plans, meaning resources across occupations or industries?

The point is you want to get the employers to build up reserves when they have the money so they can ride out the bad times with overfunded or well-funded plans. That was one of the problems that we saw last time, that basically employers did get a pass on making contributions when times were good. I have no problem saying that. I mean, the rules were screwed up in that regard. We knew the market was overvalued, we knew a crash would come or some correction would come, and we in the pension world [didn't] plan for that adequately.

I think we can do much better in the [defined-benefit] world, but I think that requires us [to rethink] what we mean by [defined benefits]. We clearly have to take a hard look at many of the rules that we have talked about today that make it hard for people — for employers — to fund the plans adequately.

(Moderator turns to the audience for questions)

QUESTION: [Were] there ever provisions in the laws that required corporations to make pension contributions?

WELLER: There are different rules on the law. If you are funded at 90 percent, you basically at some point get a holiday — funding 90 percent of current liabilities. If you fall below that, at some point — and if you do it for two years in a row — stricter rules come in and you fund up your unfunded liabilities very quickly.

[But] it's not a symmetric world. So you are being hurt when times are really bad. On the other hand, when times are good, you are getting a free pass. We know that many companies could have contributed more in the good times but they weren't required to. If we want to build up pension plans when times are good, let's require companies to fund up to 120, 130 percent so they have reserves in case times get tough.

QUESTION: So there is no legal requirement for them to fund —

Christian Weller:
"WE KNOW THAT MANY COMPANIES COULD HAVE CONTRIBUTED MORE IN THE GOOD TIMES BUT THEY WEREN'T REQUIRED TO."

WELLER: Beyond a certain limit; beyond a certain limit. That is 90 percent.

QUESTION: So if they were at 90 percent over a period of time, and one year before they got into trouble, they should have been sufficiently funded for a period of time, which does not sound like the way United [Airways] is funded.

WELLER: Well, the changes can happen very quickly. Even small interest-rate changes can turn into massive changes in liabilities. So there is a drag on declining interest rates.

QUESTION: When the money goes into a pension trust, it can't be used for anything else. So when you talk about overfunding systematically, you can't touch that money for anything else except for a transfer, which allows you to take it out for retiree health care. But you don't get any benefit from the marketplace. Your credit-rating agencies don't give you any credit for doing that either.

So I think you have to strike a balance because companies not only want to provide assets in their pension trusts for their workers, but they also have to be in business to do the things that they produce or do. So you have to strike a balance here between the rules and continuing business.

SMETTERS: The reason why pension companies wanted to overfund for a while is because it's really a tax-arbitrage issue. Assets in those plans basically accumulate tax-free. The idea is that in present-value, you could save a lot of the money by overfunding today, getting those tax-free accumulations and then contributing less tomorrow. And so there [are] a lot of tax-arbitrage issues going on there.

WELLER: But it also is question of predictability. If you make small contributions when you have the money, it seems from an employer perspective that is more beneficial than waiting until the recession hits or the market goes down or your underfunding happens. Clearly we need to strike a balance. But I think from purely an employer perspective, funding a little bit more when you have the money and then being better prepared and having smaller demands when you don't have the money seems to be the better route to go.

MODERATOR: I want to thank everybody again for taking some time this afternoon to talk about this.

To view the complete transcript from the event online go to:
http://tnr.com/panel/tnr_on.mhtml

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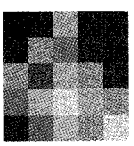

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wage. The factory had been built in China because labor is cheap, and it is being further cheapened. When the inspectors later report this fact back in Finland, management promises to do something about it.

As the film progresses, expectation of exposé dwindles. Half salary is hardly a trifling matter, but the factory seems well enough run and is apparently a haven for some of the young women whose homes are a lot less attractive. Why, then, is the picture chilling? Because it is a calm reminder of an inevitability. The sight of long lines of young women doing tiny bits of attachment work or packing hour after hour, day after day, is saddening. The fact that the factory conditions are decent, as the title says wryly, makes it even sadder. Marx said that the alienation of labor—the gap between the worker and his work—is an evil of capitalism, but this is too limited: factories like this one flourish everywhere under every system. Marx's percept is not a charge against a system but a condition of modernity. Thousands of factories around the world where the attaching and packing go on and on—it's like Chaplin's *Modern Times* without Charlie. ■

Zoë Heller
Meet the Parents

THE BODY NEVER LIES: THE LINGERING EFFECTS OF BAD PARENTING
By Alice Miller
Translated by Andrew Jenkins
(W.W. Norton, 207 pp., $23.95)

A DECADE OR SO AGO, IN *The Culture of Complaint*, Robert Hughes cited various cultural phenomena as symptoms of a rampant idiocy in American public life. He reserved particular scorn for the popular movement known as "recovery":

> As John Bradshaw, Melody Beattie and other gurus of the twelve-step program are quick to point out on no evidence whatsoever, 96 percent of American families are dysfunctional. We have been given imperfect role models, or starved of affection, or beaten, or perhaps subjected to the goatish lusts of Papa; and if we don't think we have, it is only because we have repressed the memory....
>
> The number of Americans who were abused as children and hence absolved from all blame for anything they might now do is more or less equal to the number who, a few years ago, had once been Cleopatra or Henry VIII.

Reading this now, it is tempting to feel that Hughes's outrage was a little disproportionate, that he wasted his considerable talent for vituperation on what turned out to be a passing and insignificant fad. Twelve years on, the gurus to whom he refers have sunk back into obscurity, and most of the distinctively unbeautiful language of recovery ("inner child," "personal truth," "denial") has come to seem as dated and quaint as shoulder pads.

Yet it would be wrong to deduce that the tenets of recovery have been decisively discredited. The fact that recovery's jargon is now passé may merely be an indication of how efficiently its ideas have been absorbed into the general culture. As anyone who has had cause to visit a shrink in recent years can attest, the idea that all our adult difficulties are traceable to physical and psychic wounds inflicted upon us by our parents is far from extinct. Frederick Crews and a few others continue valiantly to contest the scientific pretensions of classical Freudian psychoanalysis, but in truth the sort of pop therapy to which most Americans repair for self-discovery these days is far less interested in interpreting dreams and unlocking the Oedipal fantasies of childhood than it is in establishing "personal truth" and exploring memories of actual childhood trauma.

If one wants to understand the theory underpinning these therapeutic priorities, the work of the psychoanalyst Alice Miller is a good place to start. Recovery has never been a very precise or even coherent creed, but Miller's work represents perhaps its strongest claim to a serious framework of ideas. Miller, who was born in Poland in 1923, has spent most of her adult life as a practicing psychoanalyst in Switzerland. Her new book is the tenth in a series of passionate treatises on child abuse that she has been steadily turning out since the late 1970s. Like most of its predecessors, its thoughts on the enduring effects of childhood suffering are largely a reiteration of the thesis advanced in Miller's first and most famous book, *The Drama of the Gifted Child: The Search for the True Self*. Originally published in America in 1981 as *Prisoners of Childhood*, this short and pungent volume has since sold more than one million copies and may be reasonably regarded as the unofficial *Urtext* of the recovery school.

ITS TITLE—A RARE AND POSSIBLY unique instance of irony in Miller's work—refers not to exceptional intellectual or physical abilities, but rather to the innate talent for repressing rage and hurt that Miller believes all abused children must cultivate in order to survive the cruelty of their parents. Cruelty, as Miller defines it, is an extremely wide-ranging category of behavior. It includes not only severe instances of corporal punishment and sexual molestation, but a slew of more subtle impositions such as sleep training (getting a child to sleep through the night), "value selection" (making distinctions between a child's "good" and "bad" behavior), and the more general failure to provide a nurturing climate of respect and tolerance for a child's feelings. Indeed, by her own admission, Miller's chief interest lies in honoring the injuries that are sustained during ostensibly *happy* childhoods.

A child's "gift" for becoming numb to his deprivations results, Miller believes, in the profound impairment of his "integrity" and a lifetime of destructive syndromes. Should a gifted child become a parent, he will unconsciously seek revenge for his earlier trauma by mistreating his own offspring. With or without children, he is bound to suffer a variety of dysfunctions ranging from depression, "fragile self-esteem," and "restlessness," to drug addiction, prostitution, and mass murder. For Miller, there is almost no

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limit to the range of adult behavior for which child abuse can be held responsible. Rather in the manner of astrological character profiles, her checklist of gifted child "symptoms" offers something for almost everybody. Even nipple piercing sends up a flare:

> Women who allow their nipples to be pierced in order to hang rings from them can then pose for newspaper photographs, proudly saying that they felt no pain when having it done and that it was even fun for them. One need not doubt the truth of their statements; they had to learn very early in life not to feel pain, and today they would go to any lengths not to feel the pain of the little girl who was once sexually exploited by her father and had to imagine that it was fun for her.

THE ONLY WAY TO COMBAT "gifted child" behaviors, Miller argues, is to come to grips with their root causes. For this, "an enlightened witness" is required—a therapist willing to share the horror and indignation that will inevitably arise as a person confronts the truth about his childhood. In place of the neutral silence of the traditional analyst, Miller proposes a therapeutic stance of unswerving credulousness. Out with bearded old gents parked lugubriously in their Knoll chairs, in with warm and sympathetic "companions." Miller's disenchantment with classical Freudian theory—in particular, with its refusal to accept patients' tales of childhood abuse as confessions of a literal truth—led her to resign from the International Psychoanalytic Association in the late 1980s; and she has since gone on to claim that Freud's cancer of the jaw was a psychosomatic response to his self-censorship on the subject of child molestation.

Of course, not all gifted patients will enter therapy ready to deliver juicy tales of abuse. The nipple-piercer may swear up and down that her father was a prince. But an initial paucity of traumatic memory does not daunt Miller. Gifted children, she writes, are characterized by their lack of "real emotional understanding or serious appreciation of their own childhood vicissitudes." This is why they need therapists—smiling friends ready to unburden them of any lingering faith in the decency of their parents and to help them to disinter their true childhood despair. At this point in Miller's narrative, the gap between Hughes's parody of recovery principles and the principles themselves would appear to have grown alarmingly narrow. As she writes in *The Drama of the Gifted Child*:

> If a person is able, during this long process, to experience the reality that he was never loved as a child for what he was but was instead needed and exploited for his achievements, success, and good qualities—and that he sacrificed his childhood for this form of love—he will be very deeply shaken, but one day he will feel the desire to end these efforts. He will discover in himself a need to live according to his true self and no longer be forced to earn "love" that always leaves him empty-handed, since it is given to his false self—something he has begun to identify and relinquish.

The Drama of the Gifted Child is a strange and strangely gripping book. Much of it reads like the first draft of an essay to which the necessary qualifications and footnotes have yet to be added. A skeptical reader who starts out underlining each of Miller's unsubstantiated generalizations, rash guarantees, and suspiciously reductive case histories will eventually be forced to give up: the book is very little *but* dubious assertion. And this, it seems, is precisely the source of its enduring emotional appeal. To read Miller is like taking refuge with a fiercely protective aunt after a row with your mother. Her indignation on your behalf is bizarrely overstated—you have the dim but persistent sense that she has axes of her own to grind; and yet how warm and pleasant it is to be clutched to her heaving bosom, to hear your darkest filial rage so absolutely vindicated!

MILLER'S ADMIRERS SOMETIMES defend the intemperate tone of *The Drama of the Gifted Child* as a deliberate stylistic device—a shock tactic that Miller felt obliged to deploy in order to shake her readers out of their complacency. If this were true, one might expect her later books to offer some corrective to the unbridled passion of her original argument. But such has not been the case. On the contrary, Miller's subsequent work has only repeated and in many cases amplified the shrillness of her first book.

In volume after volume, Miller has continued to ignore the most basic standards of academic procedure, regularly substituting the regal locution "experience has taught us" for any more substantive evidence or elaboration, and adducing satisfied-patient testimonies in the brash manner of a late-night infomercial host shilling for treadmills. Her faith in the presence of an eternal "authentic self" that may be plucked at any time from the "false self," like a nut from its shell, has remained unexamined, as has her hair-raising confidence in the reliability of repressed memory. Her contention that child abuse is a widespread cause of misery has slowly evolved into the conviction that child abuse is the sole cause of all misery. Factors of race, nation, class, and politics have all become irrelevant in Miller's relentless privatization of global pain, so that by now there is not a single despot in world history whose murderous career cannot be traced to a dread moment in his childhood when he was sent to bed without his supper.

Meanwhile, the troubling grandiosity that was once merely latent in Miller's prose has burst into crazy flower. In her last book, *The Truth Will Set You Free*, Miller complained that a letter she had written to Pope John Paul II in 2002, seeking support for her campaign against spanking children, had failed to elicit a sufficiently sympathetic response. "Obviously," she writes, "the person I had asked to forward my letter and whose job it is to screen the mail was unable to relate to its contents. It is also conceivable that the information it contained aroused in them memories of their own upbringing, prompting them to dismiss my request out of hand."

Well, yes. So many things are conceivable. It is conceivable, for example, that a religious institution embroiled in its own sexual abuse scandal did not consider the catastrophic effects of spanking to be very high on its list of priorities. But never mind. Three years on, the anger inspired by the papal secretary's "denial" apparently still lingers. In *The Body Never Lies*, Miller, now eighty-two, revisits the unhappy episode. In this retelling, it emerges that she wrote several letters to the Vatican and not a single cardinal rose to the challenge of her insights. They are all, she concludes, of the devil's party without knowing it. "Indifference is a way of preserving them from opening their eyes to reality," she writes. "In this way they become advocates of evil, however convinced they may be of their humane intentions."

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The Catholic Church notwithstanding, social attitudes toward spanking and other forms of corporal punishment have changed quite drastically in Western countries over the last fifty years. Miller is not averse to taking credit for this. (In *The Body Never Lies*, she goes so far as to compare herself to Galileo, another iconoclast whose "once-forbidden" statements have since achieved widespread acceptance.) For the most part, however, she is oddly resistant to losing her status as a lonely voice in the wilderness. When she isn't fixating on the Holy Father's indifference to her important work, she is further guaranteeing her isolation by upping the ante on the strategies that she deems necessary for overcoming childhood wounds.

NOW, FOR EXAMPLE, SHE insists that the healing of gifted children cannot be effected without a complete renunciation of the Fourth Commandment ("Honor thy father and thy mother"). It is no longer enough to locate one's "personal truth." One must go further and stamp out all vestiges of compassion or love for one's sinning parents. Therapists who are unwilling to promote this uncompromising parricidal rage are, Miller claims, worse than useless.

> The path to adulthood lies not in tolerance for the cruelties we have been exposed to but in the realization of our own truth and the development of empathy for the maltreated child. It lies in the appreciation of the way in which cruelties have handicapped our whole lives as adults, the way in which so many opportunities have been destroyed and so much misery passed on unintentionally to the next generation. This tragic realization is only possible if we stop weighing the good points of our parents against the bad. If we persist in doing that, we will relapse into compassion, into the denial of the cruelties we have been subjected to, all because we believe we must take a "balanced" view of things.

To illustrate the health hazards of compassion, Miller offers several potted biographies of notoriously sickly writers and artists, whose physical ailments and premature deaths she blames on their inability to reject abusive parents. Schiller's convulsions and cramps, Woolf's nervous breakdowns and eventual suicide, Rimbaud's drug addiction and cancer—all are offered up as the grim results of misguided filial loyalty.

Miller's reasoning manifests a fairly high degree of ludicrousness throughout this section of her book, but arguably her most arrestingly dotty claims are to be found in her chapter on Proust. The writer's famous childhood longing for his mother's good-night kiss is confidently attributed to his having been born in France "on a night full of clamor and uproar caused by the fact that the population was still reeling from the shock of the Prussian invasion." Madame Proust's "nervous tension" during and after childbirth implanted in her infant son lifelong doubts "about whether he was wanted or not." Later in life, Proust's fear of losing his mother's tenuous affection rendered him incapable of resisting her controlling personality—a dilemma that found its physical expression in his asthmatic condition: "He breathed in too much air (love) and was not allowed to exhale the superfluous air (control)—that is, to rebel against his mother's engulfing claims."

Most of this book's crude notions about art—that all artistic endeavor is driven by childhood pain, and that all art is a more or less cryptic effusion of that pain—have been amply expounded in Miller's previous work. If there is anything of novelty here, it is Miller's late-blooming hostility toward art and artists. The sentimental fondness for art's cathartic capacities that Miller has formerly evinced is nowhere to be seen here. Instead, having proposed the grotesque notion that physical illness is a result of moral failure (failure, that is, to hate one's parents with the appropriate intensity), she admonishes art for its cowardly "enabling" of that failure. "Writers are concerned to produce good literature," she observes. "They make no attempt to recognize the unconscious sources of their creativity, of their urge for expression and communication.... In their work they do indeed make an effort to communicate, but at a level that serves the denial of their childhood experiences by calling itself art."

Quoting from one of James Joyce's letters, in which he expresses ambivalent affection for his late father, she chastises the writer for his idealization of a "violent alcoholic." That a son might have complicated feelings toward his complicated father is an outrage to Miller, for whom nothing but unadulterated loathing would be sufficient. She concludes her summary dismissal of Joyce by identifying the dishonest manner in which his fiction uses "brilliant prose" to evade suffering. "I attribute the great success of these novels," she notes coolly, "to the fact that very many people admire and appreciate this particular form of emotional defense."

HOWEVER THOROUGH A BASHing artists receive in *The Body Never Lies*, it is still safe to say that parents come out worse. Parents are—and have always been—the arch-villains in Miller's narrative. Not even her vehement philistinism can compete with her abiding animosity toward Mom and Dad. The relentlessness with which Miller catalogues parental sin has often led her to be described as a "bleak" or "pessimistic" writer. But this characterization, while understandable, is not strictly accurate. Miller has never discounted the possibility of good parenting. Quite the opposite: her ten books are all based on the conviction that a happy childhood—a childhood in which parents respond lovingly and openly to the truth of their child's unique personality—is entirely achievable. "Even alert parents cannot always understand their children," she writes, "but they will respect their childrens' feelings even when they cannot understand them." The strategy that she recommends for attaining the parental ideal is not so very complicated, either. Simply find an enlightened witness, and

The Last Circus

Spotlight settled center ring,
body-the-Big-Top will not move;
one second equals everything,
and stillness is the last remove

deeper than landscape and untouched
by any hand, poised counterweight
and unexpended force, the botched
arc of the final acrobat,

old elephant memory left
the way crowds leave the noose
of center ring, muttering
let the animals loose, let the animals loose.

WYATT PRUNTY

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learn to hate your forebears with healthy zeal, and presto!—all the difficulties and the frustrations you have encountered in dealing with little Johnny will vanish into the ether.

The challenge of Miller's work is not, then, its bleakness, but its Pollyannaish optimism. Whatever salutary effects we are prepared to grant psychotherapy, we must doubt whether any amount of time spent on the couch will stop parents from shouting at their kids when they leave their bedrooms in a mess. And while Miller's Romantic faith in the noble innocence of childhood has its charms, who among us is willing to put it to the test by banishing "value selection" from his household?

Being a child is hard: Miller does not entirely exaggerate when she compares the experiences of children, even in apparently kind and peaceable homes, to "life in a totalitarian regime." Her mistake is to believe that the tyrannical aspects of nuclear family life are curable. Bossing one's children around—squashing their desires and thwarting their pleasures—is not a symptom of dysfunction, but an inevitable part of what it means to be an engaged parent. Some parents are more benign than others, to be sure, but all are, in some degree, dictators. Historically, we have tended to rationalize our family arrangements on the ground that their advantages for a child (love, guidance, protection) outweigh their miseries (indoctrination, oppression, and so forth.) As defenses of tyranny go, this seems pretty solid. But perhaps we can go further and hazard that the miseries themselves serve a higher psychological or even evolutionary purpose. Yes, they fuck you up, your mum and dad (or at the very least they bug you intensely), but why else would you ever grow up and leave them? ■

Ruth Franklin

The Missing Joy

Why are American mothers driving themselves crazy?

I.

MIDWAY THROUGH MY first pregnancy, I began to receive mailings from a company called "One Step Ahead," which promised "thoughtfully selected products to help with baby ... every step of the way." My son's needs were still simple, satisfied by umbilical cord and placenta, but once he arrived, I came to understand, matters would get more complicated. I had been told to put him to sleep on his back to lower his risk of SIDS, but for this I would apparently require a "unique memory foam pillow" to prevent his skull from flattening. I had heard about turning down the hot-water heater to avoid accidentally scalding him, but I didn't know that the "safest, most comfortable" temperature for his bath was a precise 93.2 degrees, which I could monitor with a floating plastic thermometer for the tub. Eight pages were devoted to safety, featuring baby gates to block off every opening in the house, a shield to keep curious fingers out of the VCR, and a toilet-lid lock to guard against drowning. I could also outfit the backseat of my car with a mirror so as to keep an eye on the baby while I drove, stock my diaper bag with a fabric contraption to protect him from germy shopping carts, and cook up tasty first purees created by a Cordon Bleu chef.

PERFECT MADNESS
By Judith Warner
(Riverhead, 327 pp., $23.95)

HOW SHE REALLY DOES IT: SECRETS OF SUCCESSFUL STAY-AT-WORK MOMS
By Wendy Sachs
(Da Capo, 205 pp., $19.95)

WHITE HOUSE NANNIES
By Barbara Kline
(Tarcher/Penguin, 238 pp., $23.95)

But soon I discovered that taking care of a baby was not all that complicated. My son, defying his pediatrician's sternest warning, quickly demonstrated his preference for sleeping on his stomach, and we found we could test the bathwater adequately with our hands. He has yet to drown himself in the toilet. And those backseat mirrors are actually said to be a safety hazard, because if the car gets in an accident they can dislodge and hit the baby in the head. Still, I nervously peruse each new edition of the catalog, half amazed by the sheer number and specificity of the products, half wondering if I should finally invest in the elephant-shaped faucet cover before my son splits his head open in the tub.

Apparently I'm not alone. Over the past few years, at least a dozen books have attempted to analyze the miserable, manic, obsessive-compulsive state of contemporary motherhood. This trend took off with *I Don't Know How She Does It*, a satirical novel by Allison Pearson that established Kate Reddy, the book's protagonist, as an icon for sleep-deprived, sex-starved working mothers. A hedge-fund manager whose efforts to both succeed at her job and enjoy time with her children take on Homeric proportions, Kate must continually (if comically) debase herself to prove her mothering bona fides, "distressing" store-bought pies to pass them off as homemade or moving heaven and earth to change the color of the frosting on her daughter's birthday cake. Another volume, called *The Bitch in the House*, assembled personal essays by women writers on a variety of subjects, but the ones that attracted the most attention focused on the nexus of work, parenthood, and perfectionism: Kristin van Ogtrop's "Attila the Honey I'm Home" (in which one of her children tells her, "You're too mean to live in this house and I want you to go back to work for the rest of your life!"), Jill Bialosky's confession that her and her husband's once-delirious sex life ground to a halt after the birth of their son, Hope Edelman's exposé of "the myth of co-parenting."

More flutterings of distress followed in *The Mommy Myth*, in which Susan J. Douglas and Meredith W. Michaels

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coined the term "the new momism" to describe what they saw as the current cultural ideal: "a highly romanticized and yet demanding view of motherhood in which the standards for success are impossible to meet"—namely, that a mother devote herself to her children body and soul, day and night. Daphne de Marneffe, in *Maternal Desire*, focused on the flip side of this phenomenon: while all women feel pressured to compete in the "Mommy Olympics," stay-at-home mothers are generally perceived as intellectually or personally lacking, which creates a tension between a woman's natural desire to care for her children and the expectation that she ought "not to be emotionally susceptible to, or professionally derailed by, the inconvenient passions or practical exigencies of hands-on engagement with children." As if to prove de Marneffe's point, the media all but ignored *Maternal Desire*, and those reviewers who did acknowledge the book misrepresented it as a polemic for stay-at-home motherhood.

THE CONTROVERSIES REFUSE to recede. Every few months there arrives a new novel about the joys and travails of staying at home with the kids, a new study warning of the deficiencies of day care, a new article lamenting the harried state of the American family. The most successful and most incendiary example is Judith Warner's *Perfect Madness*, which, like *The Mommy Myth*, argues that contemporary mothers are living in "an age of anxiety," a joyless, airless world in which each homemade Elmo birthday cake symbolizes the "widespread, choking cocktail of guilt and anxiety and resentment and regret [that is] poisoning motherhood for American women today." A journalist and mother of two girls, Warner gave birth to both her children while living in France, where the prevailing assumption, as she describes it, is that women need to enjoy a rich life separate from mothering. On her return to the United States, she was appalled by the current culture of "total-reality motherhood," which she blames for, among other social ills, the rise in methamphetamine use by women, the current "epidemic" of sexless marriages, and even the tragedy of Andrea Yates, the Texas stay-at-home mother who drowned her five children.

The motherhood chronicle is a genre defined by its solipsism, and *Perfect Madness* is no exception. The concerns of Warner's subjects—her book is based on interviews with fewer than 150 women, many of whom appear to live in her neighborhood in Northwest Washington, D.C.—have the nasal twang of bourgeois entitlement. One frets that on the day of her son's fourth birthday party, "I didn't have the perfect 'mother of the birthday boy' sweater to throw on over my jeans so that I looked chic yet casual." Warner herself sees the inclination to enjoy a nightly glass of Calvados as an alarming indication of her own rising blood pressure. More importantly, her generalization that "all mothers in America" are caught up in the cult of perfectionism fails to persuade, especially since her book, as she acknowledges, focuses almost exclusively on the upper middle class.

Still, Warner's wildly popular screed has obviously struck a nerve for many women. And, in a broader sense, the issues that agonize her privileged neighbors are indeed universal. From "the mommy wars" to "the opt-out revolution," the new debate about American motherhood is really the old debate about American feminism. More than forty years after Betty Friedan and Gloria Steinem encouraged women to step out of the kitchen and into the workplace, the implications of this shift, and the resulting tensions between life at home and life at work, are still incompletely understood. Is it possible to "have it all"—in the words of Wendy Sachs, the author of a new book about working mothers, "to have a fantastic career and still be a great mommy"? Or, as Warner claims, has feminism betrayed today's women, who were brought up to believe they could have any job they chose, only to be forced onto the "mommy track" once they had children? Can a mother who stays home with her children defend the decision as a feminist choice? And is the "intensive parenting" that Warner deplores a guilt-induced by-product of the demands of the workplace or an inevitable consequence of society's love affair with consumerism? Mommy's evening cocktail may not actually be poisoned, but it induces a haze of confusion.

II.

FOR THE MOTHERS IN JUDITH Warner's book, misery is the norm. Whether they work outside the home or care for their children full-time, all are driven to the breaking point by "the parenting pressure cooker." Stay-at-home mothers center their entire beings around their children, acting as "camp counselor and art teacher and pre-reading specialist," spending hours organizing play dates and birthday parties. Mothers who work have it even worse: they must meet the same impossible standards and at the same time "shoulder the burden of Guilt, a media-fed drone that played in their ears every time they sat in traffic at dinnertime: Had they made the right choices? Were their children well taken care of? Should they be working less, differently, not at all? Were they really good enough mothers?"

In their "angst," and their "obsession with trivia," and their "push to be perfect," these women remind Warner of the dejected housewives of *The Feminine Mystique*. Yet instead of obsessing over the minutiae of housework, they are burdened by a different but equally soul-draining perfectionism, which she calls "the Mommy Mystique." Warner diagnoses this in a variety of forms: the current fad for "attachment parenting," a hands-on style that promotes exclusive breastfeeding, wearing the baby in a sling as much as possible, and "co-sleeping" (parents sharing a bed with the baby); the popularity of "developmental" toys and educational videos marketed as stimulating babies' brains; the increasing prevalence of food allergies or restrictions, which she sees as another manifestation of "control-freakishness." For a mother who buys into this regime—and the role of buying should not be underestimated—every parenting decision becomes a political, social, and emotional minefield:

> The Mommy Mystique tells us that we are the luckiest women in the world—the freest, with the most choices, the broadest horizons, the best luck, and the most wealth. It says we have the knowledge and know-how to make "informed decisions" that will guarantee the successful course of our children's lives. It tells us that if we choose badly our children will fall prey to countless dangers—from insecure attachment to drugs to kidnapping to a third-rate college.... We are convinced that every decision we make, every detail we control, is *incredibly important.*

Obsession with minutiae benefits no one, parents or baby. But the difference between Warner's mothers and Friedan's housewives, which Warner does not seem

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to recognize, is that the concerns of the modern mothers as she represents them are entirely superficial. The women of *The Feminine Mystique* are consumed by primary doubts about their own personhood: "I want status, I want self-respect. I want people to think that what I'm doing is important." The doubts that consume Warner's mothers are less momentous. "First, there was the whole debate about whether to have the whole class or just a few friends" to a birthday party, one says. "Then there was the whole debate about whether to do the party at home or whether to go to some place that does package deals. If we stayed at home, would we have the magician, the clown, the musician, the Moon Bounce? . . . I felt great angst about whether this measured up." It is more than a gulf of forty years that separates the existential crisis from the Moon Bounce. This isn't a crisis of parenting, it's a crisis of consumerism.

THE MOMMY MYSTIQUE IS JUST one aspect of what Warner calls America's "Motherhood Religion," which advocates the now-familiar paradigm of "a woman so bound up in her child, so tightly bonded and fused, that she herself—soul, mind, and body—all but disappeared." The 1990s soccer mom, who took off work early to cheer at her kids' games, has been replaced by the post-millennial "minivan mom," who has "opted out" of the office to spend her days shuttling her children to and from various enriching activities. But life at home turns out to be governed by a paralyzing set of strictures that would appall even the most unforgiving boss. Virtually no one can live up to these standards of parenting perfection—Warner cites a study showing that 87 percent of parents ignore the American Academy of Pediatrics recommendation that children under two watch no television at all—"but they hung over our heads like a sword of disapproval." Add in the glamorization of housework and crafts in magazines such as *Martha Stewart Living* and *Real Simple*, and the paradigm looks even more regressive.

Warner never explicitly states her bias, but her portrayal of the stay-at-home mother—an automaton with no independent beliefs, a pastiche of primary colors and popular child-development theories—is downright cruel:

> The ideal Mom, as glimpsed in *Parents*, in Brazelton, and at Gymboree, had no boundaries. She wore kids' clothes—overall shorts, and sneakers, and jumpers or smocks. She decorated her home in bright-colored plastics. . . . She played "synchrony games." She bought the Phonics bus. She read *Spot's Big Book of Colors, Shapes and Numbers* for the ten thousandth time, with gusto, because, if she didn't, her child might "mirror" her lassitude. . . . If she didn't, she risked finding her child one day staring out from his or her crib like the babies in her old psychology textbook, their faces frozen in a rictus of grief, some of whom *died of despair* over their separation from their mothers.

Her scorn notwithstanding, Warner herself shows signs of the rictus. Believing she must provide non-stop entertainment for her child, she feels herself transformed into a "human television set, so filled with twenty-four-hour children's programming that I felt as though I had no thoughts left of my own." The women she meets on the playground are superficial and more than a little neurotic; one of them needs a therapist's advice to negotiate play dates. Warner cites the rise of food allergies and health disorders such as irritable bowel syndrome as examples of "the New Neurasthenia" (the book is full of official-sounding new terms for basically the same thing), the result of a generation of control freaks internalizing their anxiety. A newspaper article names methamphetamine "the drug of choice for supermoms," highlighting the story of a working mom who just needs "more hours in the day." The ultimate victim of the cult of intensive mothering, the mother who really tries to do too much, is none other than Andrea Yates.

THE FIRST PROBLEM WITH Warner's analysis is her assumption that the parenting behaviors she describes are unconditionally pathological. She calls the AAP's recommendation to breast-feed for at least a year "cruelly insensitive to mothers' needs as adult women," apparently unaware that many women enjoy nursing and find that its benefits outweigh its inconveniences. She does not admit the possibility that the mother reading a book aloud for the "ten thousandth time" acts enthusiastic not out of the fear that her boredom might damage her child, but out of the confidence that her child enjoys it. Citing a lyrical passage by a new mother who revels in her daughter's "smell, her feelings, her needs," she condemns the woman for a "desperate attachment" that at any other point in history would be seen as "something that a good mother would get over and control." Is it so hard to imagine that mothers might be motivated by love?

Warner cannot quite imagine it. Her myopia-inducing perch in an elite suburb, and her lack of perspective in separating the truly unbalanced from the vast spectrum of normal parenting behaviors, cast considerable doubt on her ability to diagnose a genuine crisis in modern motherhood. After more than three hundred pages of her breathless, italics-laden prose, it is easy to get caught up in her hyperbole. But her fevered pitch drowns out the other side of the story. "Attachment parenting" and the other intensive-mothering ideals against which she fulminates have the support of a vocal minority, but they are hardly universal. The proponents of the "cry it out" school of sleep training (also known as "Ferberizing," and recently featured to great comic effect in *Meet the Fockers*) debate the "no-cry" partisans on the parenting Internet groups every few months, with neither side in the clear majority. The books in the famous *What to Expect* series, which take a considerably sterner approach on hot-button issues such as extended breastfeeding (wean by a year at the latest) and sleep (it should take place in a crib), outsell the attachment-parenting guru Dr. Sears by a comfortable margin. As Ann Hulbert demonstrated in *Raising America*, each generation of parents has tended to vacillate between two conflicting camps of experts. The present age is no different.

What is different about the present day is its public celebration of self-absorption. The deluge of "mommy madness" books is just part of it. According to a recent article in *The New York Times*, there are now nearly ten thousand parenting-themed blogs, most of them by stay-at-home mothers and fathers who in a previous age might simply have kept a journal but now are able to publish their thoughts for all to read. In one extreme example, the stay-at-home dad Ben MacNeil chronicled his daughter's every bottle and diaper change until she was a year old (the diaper total reached well over three thousand). "Parents have been parenting for hundreds of thousands of years, but this is the first time I've ever done it," he explained to the *Times*. But

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there is an irony here. What looks like an intense focus on one's baby is actually an intense focus on oneself.

More often, however, these blogs reveal not obsessed, neurotic "intensive parenting" but the reflections of mothers and fathers caught up in the normal vicissitudes of life with babies and toddlers. In her blog "Bringing Up Ben and Birdy," parts of which have just been published as the book *Waiting for Birdy*, Catherine Newman muses on "the great barf-tastrophe" (a family-wide stomach flu), her son's first cavity, and similarly non-earth-shattering themes with humor and level-headedness. Other blogs, by working moms or stay-at-home dads, have an explicitly political focus, seeking to bring attention to America's relative lack of social structures supporting either group of parents. Perhaps anyone who spends fifteen hours a week (that is one blogger's estimate) doing anything other than looking into her baby's eyes is by definition a "slacker mom." But if the women in Warner's book were even a fraction as aware of their own inner lives, they might be able to recognize the difference between mothering and smothering.

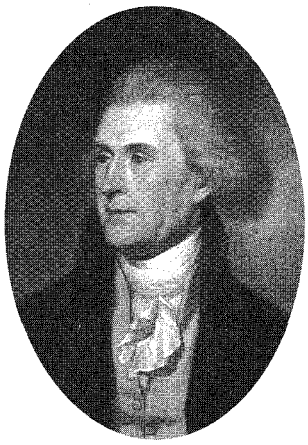
III.

As Warner endlessly drones on about the difficulties of mothering in America—"A year went by and I could not find a reliable babysitter.... Sometimes, for no apparent reason, I broke out into hives"—an oblique reference to her book deadline makes it clear that the entire time she is arranging her children's toys and books by color and size she is also trying to work, apparently without any help. (Her husband never appears in the book, not even in the chapter sarcastically titled "Wonderful Husbands," in which the women in her focus groups castigate their partners for their "learned incompetence" at child care.) This, more than the pressure to teach preschoolers to read or the waiting list for the right violin teacher, can drive a person crazy. When Virginia Woolf wrote that what a woman needs to work independently is a room of her own and a small income, she left out something equally important. If the woman is a mother, she needs child care.

It is a common fantasy of mothers on maternity leave that they will be able to do their jobs from home, working while the baby naps and stashing her in a

"One of the great biographies of the 20th century."
—*New Republic*

Jefferson and His Time



By Dumas Malone

"Malone is the giant on whose shoulders every subsequent scholar of Jefferson stands, and his work remains seminal in shaping our understanding of who Jefferson was. Both from a purely scholarly standpoint and outside the groves of academe, Malone's biography of Jefferson is simply a great read. There is a whole new generation of Jefferson lovers who will want to own this set."—**Joseph J. Ellis, National Book Award–winning author of *American Sphinx: The Character of Thomas Jefferson***

Dumas Malone's classic biography *Jefferson and His Time*—originally published in six volumes over a period of thirty-four years, between 1948 and 1982—was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in history and became the standard work on Jefferson's life. The University of Virginia Press is pleased to announce that the complete, illustrated six-volume biography is available for the first time in a handsome boxed set. Merrill Peterson, editor of the Library of America edition of Thomas Jefferson's writings, has contributed a new foreword to the Virginia edition.

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bouncy seat by the desk while they tap away at the computer. My own such fantasy evaporated with the single article I tried to write during my leave. "Is this a bad time?" my editor asked coolly over the phone in her sophisticated drawl as my three-month-old howled in the background. "Oh no, not at all," I replied, trying to latch him on with one hand and locate my pen and notes with the other.

This fantasy—I have heard it expressed by dozens of professional women—says something important about mothers' feelings about leaving their children. I know women who are thrilled with the enrichment that their toddlers receive in top-quality day care centers or who are convinced that their nannies provide more loving care than they could manage after ten hours nonstop with a baby. But many others regard child care as nothing better than a necessary compromise. They need to continue working—for economic, personal, or professional reasons—but they also miss their children and wish they could spend more time with them. Can child-rearing merge more or less seamlessly with one's professional hopes and dreams, or are those priorities subsumed by a new imperative? For most women, I have come to believe, the answer lies somewhere in between.

THE "MOMMY WARS" OF RECENT years have pitted stay-at-home mothers against working mothers. (A notorious *New York* magazine cover depicted a stay-at-home mother in sweats and a working mother in a business suit with the caption "Who's the Better Mom?") But the dividing line between the two groups is thinner than you might think, with women frequently crossing it in both directions. The distinction seems to be more a matter of identification than of practice, as both "stay-at-home mothers" and "working mothers" are likely to work part-time. In a local poll recently conducted by *The Washington Post*, 63 percent of the women identified themselves as "working mothers," but one-quarter worked less than forty hours a week, and half of the "stay-at-home mothers" (36 percent of the total) have worked at some point since having children. National statistics are comparable: according to data from the Department of Labor, cited by Warner, in 2000 64 percent of American mothers worked, but only one-third of married women with children under six worked forty hours a week or more. Wendy Sachs reports in her book that 55 percent of new mothers return to work—in other words, nearly half stay home. And a recent study conducted by Sylvia Ann Hewlett and Carolyn Buck Luce analyzing the career paths of an elite group of professional women showed that 43 percent of the mothers in the group had left work voluntarily at some point during their careers.

It seems undeniable that many women, given the option, prefer not to follow the traditional career trajectory. They would rather scale back their working hours in order to spend more time with their children or even "opt out" of the workforce entirely. (The term "opt-out revolution" comes from a *New York Times Magazine* cover story in 2003 by Lisa Belkin, which was among the first accounts of wealthy, educated professional women leaving their jobs to become stay-at-home mothers.) The question is why. In Warner's view, social pressures and the regressive standards of the professional world are forcing women out of the workplace. She cites one woman who is literally blackmailed into taking a lesser post after her return from maternity leave, and then must stay home after an accident leaves her in chronic pain. Another woman, who finds her career as a physician "incompatible" with being a mother, complains that feminism has betrayed her.

Warner blames society, which she sees as heading down a regressive spiral since the heyday of feminism. In the 1970s, she says, the media supported working mothers, and there was a general faith that fathers would help, good babysitters could be found, and "work and motherhood could be balanced." This trend continued through the 1980s, with women's magazines "keeping the happy story of liberated motherhood alive," including a poll by *Ladies' Home Journal* in which more than half of employed mothers said they would keep working even if they didn't need the money. But now the icon of the fulfilled, guilt-free working mother has been replaced by the conflicted mommy-trackers of today. The pressure of "total-reality motherhood," Warner believes, has corrupted women's psyches, pressuring them to quit work so that they can devote their entire beings to their babies.

If women are determined to keep working, they do so in the face of nearly insurmountable obstacles, according to Warner. During the recession of the late 1990s, she writes, women began to discover that just as they hit their professional pinnacle, their lives became "unmanageable." The government required no mandatory maternity leave until the Family and Medical Leave Act was passed in 1993, and there are still no public subsidies for day care. "*Some* (in fact, relatively few) women could now choose to stay home," Warner observes. "Many more women were effectively put in the situation of *having* to stay home—either because their now sixty-hour workweek was incompatible with family life or because their husbands' seventy-hour workweek meant that if they didn't stop working there would literally be *no one* at home with the kids."

IS THE WORKING MOTHER'S SITUATION really so intolerable? The negative rhetoric notwithstanding, there appear to be women who do manage to "balance" work and family. In her relentlessly upbeat book, Wendy Sachs culls nuggets of inspiration from interviews with women pursuing prominent careers. As always in such books, her motivation is personal: Sachs, a former television producer, writes that after the birth of her first child, she was stunned that only two of the highly educated women in her mothers' group planned to return to work full-time. "We're the women who were raised in an environment where anything was supposed to be possible. We're the ones who had the doors to advancement jimmied open for us to waltz through, so why were so many women turning on their heels and leaving once they became mothers?" she asks. "I felt desperate to find moms who weren't dropping out but who were staying in—and I was equally desperate to discover how they were doing it all."

Sachs's subjects are celebrity fashion designers, psychologists, journalists, teachers, bankers, and other middle-class professionals who are largely working for personal satisfaction rather than financial necessity: "I'm not working to put food on the table, I'm working to put Whole Foods on the table," one of them tells her. While the very idea of such self-indulgence sends Warner's mothers into paroxysms of guilt, Sachs's subjects do not torture themselves when they get caught in traffic at dinnertime. "Many women have to work, and others choose to work, but the theme remains the same: having a career is not only good for women; it's good for mothers," Sachs

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states. The implication—that what is good for mothers is good for their children—is so self-evident as to be left unstated. And Sachs is one of the few commentators to recognize the impact of divorce on women's choices: "In the year following divorce a woman's standard of living plummets 45 percent while a man's rises 15 percent.... Yet when the pop cultural conversation turns to motherhood, work, and 'choices,' it usually leaves out the very real and scary possibility that women may have to support themselves and their children."

The women Sachs interviews strike realistic, rational attitudes toward their lives as professionals and mothers; the air they breathe is markedly free from angst. At the same time, the juggling involved would make a clown blanch. Despite the positive spin, there is a sadness to these tales that cannot be ignored. The accommodation of mothers' needs is still relatively rare: Sachs writes that she stopped nursing her first child the day she returned to work at CNN, because she was embarrassed to ask whether there was any place for her to pump breastmilk. (There was, but she found out about it too late.) An undercurrent of regret courses through the book. Sachs claims that most of the mothers she asked ("more than 100") feel guilty not about working but about taking time out for themselves rather than spending every second of their non-working lives with their children. If they have so little time at home that they begrudge each moment away, that is not enough.

While part-time employment is commonly perceived as the best of both worlds, mothers who work full-time or more are often subject to the hostility of cultural commentators. These attacks can come from the unlikeliest sources, as Barbara Kline's book reveals. The owner of a nanny placement agency in Washington, D.C. has written an ostensibly humorous memoir of her years in the business that proves to be an astonishingly mean-spirited attack on the working mothers who are her clients. Kline, who falls into that category herself, writes that she quickly became disillusioned with stay-at-home motherhood. After a series of disappointing babysitters, she launched her agency, White House Nannies, "to solve our common problem."

But most readers won't have much in common with Kline's super-wealthy clients, who pay their live-in nannies upwards of $750 per week and may hire two or even three of them to ensure round-the-clock supervision. Kline's book revolves around a certain "VVIP" family: "Janette Huntington," a White House correspondent for "ABC, CBS, NBC, the initials don't really matter"; her lawyer husband David Wilder; and their son Spencer. Kline has nothing but scorn for these parents and their demands: "Like a lot of other über-parents, Janette and David are determined to do everything perfectly for their child, as if that were possible. (Everything, that is, except being with their children when they're awake.)" To Janette's insistence that Spencer not be exposed to television, she snorts: "How will Baby ever see Mommy if he can't watch her on TV?" At one point, Janette is stunned to find herself alone with her son for an entire Saturday—for the first time. He is nearly two.

Kline does acknowledge that "because I was fortunate enough to work for myself while my kids were young, I didn't have to make the excruciatingly difficult choices that my clients like Janette face." But this is a rare moment of sympathy in an otherwise bilious book. One "biotech executive mother" puts her children to bed by intercom. Other "workaholic parents" enforce no discipline at all; one "elected official (who'll remain nameless)" and his wife regularly feed their son M&M's for breakfast. The book's hero is David Wilder, who finally quits his job rather than fight to become senior partner. "I finally figured out what success is," he tells Kline. "It's knowing I can get home every night by six-thirty—OK, sometimes it's more like seven." These clueless, heartless caricatures reinforce only the most negative stereotypes.

IV.

Working mothers face a double dilemma: the material, which comes down to flexible, or not-so-flexible, working conditions; and the emotional—the difficulty of leaving one's children in the care of another, regardless of how comfortable or justified or necessary that decision is. And for many women Judith Warner's analysis of the professional landscape clearly rings true. Pulled by the conflicting desires to fulfill their professional ambitions and also hang out at the playground, they may indeed find that there is no perfect solution. "As young women, we had choices—endless choices," Warner writes. "But motherhood made it often impossible to act on our choices. Or gave us choices on the order of: You can continue to pursue your dreams at the cost of abandoning your children to long hours of inadequate day care."

But this is not precise. It is not "motherhood" that makes it impossible for some women to realize their plans; it is a combination of professional demands, child-care options, and one's own personal needs. If a mother has no day care or babysitter, she will be physically unable to do her job. (No working woman, it seems, is immune to this problem: many of Sylvia Plath's letters to her mother from the last few months of her life lament that she would be able to get back to her writing if she could just find a good nanny.) If she has an inadequate child-care situation, she will be able at least to leave her house, but the mental anguish of worrying about her child will take its toll at work. And women outside Warner, Sachs, and Kline's demographic—that is, most of America—who for economic reasons must settle for long hours of substandard child care are in a truly torturous position. But my guess is that they worry about bigger things than the integrity of their feminism.

Even with the best care, one's own sense of how much time away from home is too much turns out to be an unpredictable and important factor. It disrespects no one to recognize that certain careers requiring, say, sixty or more hours a week—most medical specialties, positions at many law firms, investment banking—are likely to cause discomfort in mothers who wish to spend more than one or two waking hours a day with their children. By the end of *I Don't Know How She Does It*, even the indomitable Kate Reddy quits her job, after a humiliating visit to the emergency room with her infant son where she is forced to admit to the doctor how little she knows of his symptoms over the last twenty-four hours.

This complicated discomfort has largely been ignored. An economist quoted by Daphne de Marneffe reports that the majority of her female undergraduate students "express no doubt that they will, at age forty, earn the same amount of money as men with similar education credentials. Yet they also plan to have two children, and (unlike the men in the same class) they plan to take time out from their careers in order to raise them.

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When I point out that something is wrong with their calculations they aren't entirely surprised. But they seem almost embarrassed by having to consider the issue." That may be changing. De Marneffe also cites a lawyer who worked fifty hours a week during her first son's infancy and quit to stay home with her second child. "Before you have kids, you have the almost swaggering attitude that you won't fall into the mommy trap," she says. "You don't believe that once you're there, you'll genuinely *want* to be with your kids. Now, whenever I'm in a position to counsel younger associates, I tell them, 'Set up your marriage, finances and domestic life so that they don't depend on your continued wage earning, because hard as it is to imagine, once you have kids, you may not want to do what you're doing anymore.'" But while the advice sounds good, for many it is not realistic. Unless they are blessed with high-earning husbands or independent wealth, most women find that two incomes are necessary to keep their families afloat, and not just because they drive a BMW or live in a McMansion. Good school districts, safe neighborhood playgrounds, and low crime rates cost money.

FOR THE MOST RECENT GENERATION of professional women—women now in their twenties and thirties, the daughters and the granddaughters of feminism—acceptance into the workplace seems perfectly natural. And with the ability to take one's career for granted comes the possibility of questioning whether it is worth the sacrifices involved. "Even though much has been made about our generation expecting and wanting to 'have it all,' women today are redefining what 'all' means," Sachs writes. "Definitions of 'success' have more to do with job satisfaction and flexibility than with prestige and position. Women want to be respected and compensated fairly in our jobs even if we work three or four days a week at the office. We want flextime, part-time, and job-share to be viewed not as a privilege but as an integral part of the work culture." Women want to work, in sum, but not if it means not seeing their kids between dawn and dusk.

Unfortunately, what women want and what employers want are not entirely the same. The parameters Sachs describes are unusual in most professions and unheard of in others. Opting out is relatively easy for women who can afford it, but opting in—returning to work—is more difficult. In the study conducted by Hewlett and Buck Luce, only three-quarters of women who wanted to rejoin the workforce were able to do so, and only 40 percent returned full-time. (Tellingly, 93 percent of the women who took time off wanted to return at some point to their careers.) When they do return, women who have opted out can be penalized by a cut in earning power of more than one-third. The economist Jane Waldfogel notes that women in their mid- to late twenties earn nearly as much as their male counterparts do, but when they start having children their wages drop. By the time they reach their early forties, they are earning less than three-quarters of the wage for men.

There are signs, particularly in the corporate world, that the traditional attitude is changing. During the mid-1990s, the consulting firm Ernst & Young implemented a program of flexible work policies and other incentives designed to appeal to women, and it has succeeded in raising its number of female partners. But what is needed is more than new programs. (Jack Welch recently admitted in *Newsweek* that "bosses know that the work-life policies in the company brochure are mainly for recruiting purposes" and have little relation to actual practice.) A society that has grown dependent on a greater number of workers will suffer the costs of losing a significant proportion of them. Already economists are speaking of a female "brain drain." For more than twenty years, as Sachs notes, women have earned more undergraduate degrees than men; last year more women than men matriculated at Harvard. The graduating classes at some elite law schools are 50 percent female or more; medical-school classes are nearly half women. These are precisely the professions that women are deserting. "Given current demographic and labor market trends, it's imperative that employers learn to reverse this brain drain," Hewlett and Buck Luce warn. "Indeed, companies that can develop policies and practices to tap into the female talent pool will enjoy a substantial competitive advantage."

SO THE CURRENT SITUATION FOR women in the workplace can look bleak—but only until one realizes that the very existence of this public debate means that, for all the negative talk about how little things have changed, the landscape for women today is radically different than it was for the housewives of *The Feminine Mystique*. Even Warner has to admit that mothers really have come a long way:

> We do have so many more options than did the women of Friedan's generation, who, if they didn't leave college altogether to get married, were herded, afterward, into the main female professions of teaching, secretarial work, and nursing and were subject to condescension and ridicule if they tried to branch out further into the typically "male" professions. We do not have to leave work now when our pregnancies start showing. Day care *does* exist—which it did not, for all intents and purposes, in the 1960s. We have antidiscrimination laws, access to contraception [and abortion, though Warner doesn't mention it]. The ideal that Betty Friedan dreamed of for women, that we'd be able to reach our "full human potential—by participating in the mainstream of society," is possible for us.

This, finally, is what the debate comes down to: women's ability to reach their "full human potential," to contribute actively and meaningfully to society, in whatever way their natural ambitions and inclinations drive them. And for most women this seems to mean pursuing some sort of professional life, regardless of whether their families could manage without their salaries. There are signs that this is not the scandal that Warner believes it to be. A recent poll in *Parenting* magazine drew 22,000 responses to the question "Is it okay for moms to work if they don't need the money?" Seventy-one percent of the responders said yes. By this logic, of course, it is also "okay" for mothers to stay home, for a few months or a few years, if that constitutes the fulfillment of their ambitions. Even Warner recognizes that the reasons stay-at-home mothers give for their decision are often not much different from the reasons working moms give for theirs: "At base, they spring both from a psychological need for self-fulfillment and an effort to meet the material needs of their families."

Of course, the impediments to free choice can be real. Some women leave the workforce out of the desire to care for their children, but others are pressured to do so by external influences: they cannot find or afford good child care, or they are

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Aid to Israel

Does the U.S. get its money's worth?

Israel and Egypt are the two largest recipients of U.S. aid. For its"participation" in the Gulf War, Egypt was forgiven its indebtedness of $9 billion. Israel pays its bills. It receives $2.8 billion every year. Of that amount, $2.0 billion is for military aid and $0.8 billion for economic aid. It's fair to ask whether this is a good deal for the American taxpayer.

What are the facts?

The only democratic country in the Middle East. Israel is the only genuinely democratic state in the Middle East. It is committed to freedom and equality, and the rule of law. It embodies the fundamental values that are in tune with those of America and that America has traditionally supported. Israel's military and political importance in the Middle East and its strategic position stabilize the entire area, including the oil fields of the Persian Gulf. During the Cold War, it was America's indispensable rampart against the inroads and expansionist ambitions of the Soviet Union. It is now a western bulwark against the aggressive intents of Iran and other bellicose nations that threaten the interests of the United States. It is a most reliable partner in the promotion of Western strategic interests and in the stabilization of the Middle East. Over 20% of its budget goes for defense, compared to 7% in the U.S. and less than 1% in Japan. Israel has one of the best armies in the world. Its navy and air force are the major deterrent forces in the eastern Mediterranean.

Israel effectively secures NATO's southeastern flank, without having a single American soldier stationed in its territory. Still, the superb military installations, the air and sea lift capabilities, the equipment and food storage capacity, and the trained manpower to maintain and repair sophisticated U.S. equipment are instantly at hand in Israel. It is the only country in the area that makes itself available to the United States, in any contingency.

Only fraction of aid stays in Israel. There is no other country in the Middle East except Israel that can be considered to have a stable government or populace friendly to the United States. There is much danger that any military aid to Arab countries, and military equipment given or sold to them, will suffer the same fate as the untold billions of dollars and priceless military secrets that were lost to our enemies in the debacle of Iran. Is Saudi Arabia more stable? Egypt? Jordan? Kuwait? Judge for yourself!

> "American aid to Israel is a two-way street. Aid to Israel is America's greatest defense bargain."

Only a fraction of the aid given stays in Israel. By far the largest share remains with American defense contractors. Peter McPherson, former administrator of the Agency for International Development, estimated that every billion dollars of aid to Israel creates 60,000 to 70,000 jobs in the United States.

Compared to the $2.0 billion yearly military aid to Israel, the U.S. contributes more than $130 billion(!) every year to the defense of Europe and more than $30 billion to the defense of Japan, Korea, and the Far East. Over 300,000 U.S. troops are stationed with NATO and over 30,000 U.S. troops in the Far East. In contrast, not one single U.S. soldier needs to be stationed and put at risk in Israel. U.S. military analysts estimate that the U.S. would have to spend the equivalent of $150 billion a year in the Middle East to maintain a force equivalent to Israel's.

There are many other benefits that the U.S. military derives from Israel. Israel is the only country that has gained battlefield experience with U.S. weapons. This experience is immediately conveyed to the U.S. Enormous quantities of captured Soviet weapons and defense systems were turned over to the U.S. military for analysis. Israel, in the light of its experience, continually modifies U.S. weapons systems. For instance, Israeli scientists have made over 200 improvements in the F-15 alone and similar improvements, mostly in avionics, in later-generation planes. It would be more in line with reality if military aid to Israel were classified as part of the defense budget, rather than as "aid". Israel is truly America's unsinkable aircraft carrier in the Middle East. Former President Reagan put it well: "The fall of Iran has increased Israel's value as perhaps the only remaining strategic asset in the region on which the United States can fully rely." American aid to Israel is a two-way street. Aid to Israel is America's greatest defense bargain.

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unable to change work situations that require more from them than they are willing to give. Ironically, the cultural conservatives, who would most be expected to support freedom of choice without government intervention, have stood in the way of the kind of reforms that would make such choice accessible to more women. A standardized system of public regulation for day care, plus generous subsidies to lower-income families, would help to ensure that children would not have to be left in substandard care. (Studies have shown the benefits of good day care on children's social and intellectual development, so presumably such policies could be justified also in terms of future economic benefits.) But bills in support of child care have come before Congress at least five times since the 1970s, and all but one either died there or was vetoed by the president. (The bill that passed, part of the 1990 Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act, was the weakest one, offering improvements for only about 220,000 children.) And the benefits under the current Family and Medical Leave Act, which mandates up to twelve weeks of unpaid maternity leave, are paltry compared with similar laws in Europe; and many companies are exempt.

AMBIVALENCE ABOUT LEAVING one's children nags even the most committed working mother. The most poignant moments in *I Don't Know How She Does It* come when Kate's love for her work rubs up directly against her love for her children.

> There have been times over the past year when I have tried to explain to my daughter—I felt she was old enough to hear this—why Mummy has to go to work. Because Mum and Dad both need to earn money to pay for our house and for all the things she enjoys doing like ballet lessons and going on holiday. Because Mummy has a job she is good at and it's really important for women to work as well as men. Each time the speech builds to a stirring climax—trumpets, choirs, the tearful sisterhood waving flags—in which I assure Emily that she will understand all this when she is a big girl and wants to do interesting things herself.

Kate has a brilliant mind, a talent for managing money that is a source of great pride and accomplishment. Working is not a business arrangement for her; it is a calling. But on the next page Kate is powerless against her daughter's pleas:

> "Are you putting me to bed tonight? Is Mummy putting me to bed tonight? Are you? Who is putting me to bed tonight? Are you, Mum, are you?"
>
> Do you know how many ways there are of saying the word *no* without actually using the word *no*? I do.

I don't mean to imply that motherhood is not an "interesting thing." But any woman who feels the tug of the intellect as well as the tug of the heartstrings has to find some way to manage both.

"American women—can-do daughters of their country's optimism—still secretly nourish a poignant hope that there is An Answer to the dilemma of work and family," Marjorie Williams wrote several years ago in response to Pearson's novel. "On a personal level, and as a matter of social policy, we often seem to be waiting for the No-Fault Fairy to come and explain at last how our deepest conflict can be managed away." We are still waiting. But we must not wait for a salvation that can never come. It is time to recognize that there is no inherently perfect balance of work and family, and that no amount of intensive parenting can take away the sadness of not being with one's children as much as one would like. Children's needs and desires, and parents' needs and desires, are constantly in flux. If we are fortunate, we will be able to adjust our lives in accordance with them; and like any contortion, it will require some stretching, some groaning, and some pain. The tension that we feel is not the problem afflicting mothers in America today. It is the solution. ■

Emily Wilson
The Plonking Muse

THE FIRST POETS: LIVES OF THE ANCIENT GREEK POETS
By Michael Schmidt
(Alfred A. Knopf, 410 pp., $30)

IN THE BEGINNING OF THE *THEOgony*, the poet tells us that the Muses taught Hesiod glorious song while he was tending his sheep at the foot of Mount Helicon. They spoke to "me," says Hesiod, insulted the current occupation of Hesiod and his fellow shepherds ("Rustic shepherds, wretched, shameful creatures, mere stomachs!"), and boasted about their own mysterious powers: "We know how to say many false things like the truth,/and whenever we wish, we know how to tell the truth." Then the Muses presented Hesiod with a scepter and a laurel branch, and breathed inspiration into him, commanding him to sing about the blessed immortals—which he does in the rest of the poem.

This, as Michael Schmidt remarks in his new book, is "a good story." The switch from third person to first person is remarkable, and creates a more intimate relationship between poet and poem than we find in the Homeric poems. The story tells us a great deal about the poet's understanding of his art. Poetry is available even to the peasant shepherd, but it lifts him above the level of his stomach. It carries enormous cultural authority: the poet holds a scepter, like a king, and is able to communicate with the divine.

What this story does not tell us is anything at all about Hesiod's own life. It is evidence that the author of these verses calls himself "Hesiod," but it is not evidence that his work was inspired by a vision, nor that he once worked as a shepherd in the Mount Helicon area. The passage is not exactly the equivalent of a Henry James preface, an explanation of how the following work of art came to be written. Hesiod is composing a programmatic fantasy, not reportage or autobiography.

One could try to rationalize the supernatural elements of the story, in the hope

Emily Wilson teaches classics at the University of Pennsylvania and is the author of MOCKED WITH DEATH: TRAGIC OVERLIVING FROM SOPHOCLES TO MILTON *(Johns Hopkins University Press).*

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of making it sound more plausible. The claim that those pesky Olympian Muses are the daughters of Zeus "the holder of the goat skin," Schmidt suggests, "may be a way of alluding to a mighty human master who imparted the divine art of song to the young shepherd, his poetic apprentice, and Hesiod translated the man and the debt into a 'higher register.'" Well, it might be. But this is pure speculation on Schmidt's part. It is certainly a dubious way of doing biography. The whole notion that Hesiod is giving a factual report of how he became a poet seems to miss the crucial point about these Muses: they "know how to say many false things like the truth."

Many genres of ancient Greek poetry, such as epic and tragedy, tend to exclude the poetic "I" altogether. Homer and Sophocles never come forward to speak in the first person, although the pseudo-Homeric *Margites* identifies its author as the "blind singer of Chios." Other, less elevated genres—lyric, iambic satire, didactic poetry, epigram—often do use the first person. But none of these ancient genres is confessional, or even genuinely introspective.

SCHOLARS ARGUE ABOUT THE VALUE of biographical criticism, and some would argue (as would I) that the knowledge of a poet's life does not necessarily help us to understand his or her work. It is perfectly possible, of course, to write accurate biographical accounts of most modern and early modern poets, and such accounts may be critically useful. We have quite a lot of evidence even for the life of Shakespeare, which is often said to be poorly documented. But the danger of the "biographical fallacy" is that biographical facts (or, worse, biographical fantasies) may become a substitute for the real critical work of engaging with the text. Biographical reading may suggest a reductive causality that omits imagination from the creative process.

Nowhere is biography less illuminating than with ancient poets, because we have absolutely no documentary evidence for any of these people's lives. Our only sources of biographical evidence are the poems themselves, and the ancient testimonia. Several anonymous or pseudonymous *Lives* of classical authors were produced in late antiquity. Some biographical stories are collected in the Suda, the Byzantine school encyclopedia. Others appear piecemeal in authors such as Plutarch and Athenaeus. But in most cases this evidence is extremely untrustworthy. Another book called *The Lives of the Greek Poets*, and a better one, was written more than twenty years ago by Mary Lefkowitz. Unlike Schmidt, Lefkowitz makes the study of sources central to her story, and argues that the ancient lives are often based not on remembered biographical fact, but on the poets' own surviving work. They are criticism posing as biography.

Some details in some of the ancient lives may reflect reality: it is possible, for instance, that Simonides, as the ancient lives tell us, was the first poet to take money for each poem, rather than being funded by a patron. But to fill out the biography of Simonides, we need fiction, not biography: Mary Renault's novel *The Praise Singer* offers a powerful but candidly fictional account of his life, which provides the general reader with a vivid sense of the world in which ancient Greek poetry was produced. Writing a modern biography of Orpheus or Homer is rather like writing a biography of Batman, or Madame Bovary, or God. There is plenty of material, but the exercise is misguided and futile.

IN FACT, AN INTERESTING BUT very different book could have been written about how the legends about the lives of ancient Greek poets developed and mutated, and how they have been used since antiquity. The lives of Homer, presumably, are purely mythical. It is highly unlikely that there was a "Homer" who single-handedly composed the whole of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. The Homeric poems are based on a long oral tradition; some parts of the poems seem to be several hundred years older than others, since there are inconsistencies about burial practices and about the metals used for military equipment that reflect changes in material culture discovered by archaeology. It is possible that Homer was a clerk, not himself a poet, who collected up and edited the best of the oral poets' work. Perhaps Homer was a committee, a group of poets who teamed up with at least one person who could write, and pooled their best material. Or perhaps, as Gregory Nagy has argued, the Homeric poems did not exist as we have them until they were edited by Alexandrian scholars. The composition of these texts would then have taken at least a thousand years, and authorship would be divided among enormous numbers of singers, writers, editors, and scholars. Given these famous and intractable Homeric problems, to try to read the Homeric poems biographically seems mad.

The ancient biographical testimonia about Homer are interesting not because they are true, but because they reveal an enormous amount about late antique attitudes toward poetry, and toward the figure often known simply as "the poet." We learn from the Suda that the poet's parentage was disputed; some said he was the son of Apollo and Calliope (and hence a half-brother of Orpheus); others claimed that he was the son of Telemachus. The alternatives suggest different ideas about the Homeric poems. They are clearly great literature, and their author must therefore have been at least partly divine; but the *Odyssey* creates also an intimate sense of involvement and empathy with the human characters, and so its author must have been one of Odysseus's family. The conclusions may seem naïve, but the observations are perfectly valid.

The Suda lists twenty different possible birthplaces for Homer; every town in the ancient world would have liked to claim him for its own. There is a fairly consistent tradition that Homer was blind and wandered begging through all the towns of Greece. The stories may reflect a buried memory that the Homeric poems began in a pre-literate age: blind poets do not write. More importantly, the myths tell us something about how the Greeks viewed their own literary and cultural heritage. Stories of the wandering poet suggest an awareness that the Homeric poems were the common property of all the Greek cities. Aelian, the Greek rhetorician of the second century C.E., reports in his *Varia Historia* that when Homer vomited, other lesser poets scrabbled round the sick bowl, grabbing scraps from the master's mouth. This tells us a lot about the bitter and satirical way

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a later age viewed the master's influence on the lesser poets who came after him: poets have no more control over what happens to their work than a sick man has over his own vomit.

Ancient Greek poems provide only minimal information about the people who composed them. In some cases, we know only very roughly when the poet lived; in other cases, such as Pindar's odes for particular Olympic festivals, poems can be dated reliably. But that is about as far as it goes. Consider the seventh-century iambic poet Archilochus. Greek iambic is a simple, conversational meter, associated with low, satirical subject matter. Archilochus's work survives only in fragments, but from them one can construct quite an exciting life story. He seems to have been born on the quiet island of Paros, but abandoned his homeland for war: "Paros, farewell," he says, "and those figs too, that quiet life by the sea." He fought on "golden Thasos," part of a Greek attempt to colonize this rich island. He may have been a mercenary. At some point he threw away his shield; as he says (in David Mulroy's version): "Some Thracian is waving the shield I reluctantly left by a bush, a flawless piece. / So what? I saved myself. Forget the shield. I will get another, no worse."

Archilochus's sex life, if we take the poetry as evidence, was equally eventful. He expresses love for a girl called Neoboule. ("O, to touch Neoboule's hand!" is arguably the earliest fragment of Western love poetry.) Other fragments suggest that the relationship has gone wrong: Archilochus curses Neoboule herself, her father Lycambes, and her sisters. A long papyrus fragment discovered in 1974 draws a sharp contrast between two girls, one of whom may be Neoboule. The speaker first rants against a girl who is said to be hideous: her face and bottom are indistinguishable, and she ought to work as a scarecrow. Then the poem turns into a fairly explicit description of great sex with the second girl. Schmidt cites Guy Davenport's version: "I said no more but took her hand ... touched her hot breasts with light fingers, /spraddled her neatly and pressed / Against her fine, hard, bared crotch. / I caressed the beauty of all her body / And came in a sudden white spurt / While I was stroking her hair."

Does this describe a real sexual encounter? Did Archilochus really abandon his shield? Was there even such a person as Neoboule, a name that means "New Plan," and is suspiciously appropriate as the name of an innovative poet's girlfriend? The answer to all these questions is probably not. It is certainly a mistake to imagine that Archilochus maintained anything like modern journalistic standards of accuracy. In his military and erotic poems, Archilochus is offering an amusing and provocative challenge to contemporary cultural pieties. The Spartan poet-general Tyrtaeus, who lived at roughly the same time as Archilochus, wrote the famous line that Horace later imitated: "It is a beautiful thing when a good man falls and dies fighting for his country." In the poetry of Archilochus, the beautiful thing is staying alive. As he says in another fragment, "Nothing good can be said for being dead."

Archilochus is the first author to contrast the fox and the hedgehog: "The fox has many tricks, / the hedgehog only one, but it's enough." Prickly and self-protective, a survivor rather than a fighter, the hedgehog is like the iambic poet, who pretends his vicious attacks on others are only to defend himself. The image tells us very little about Archilochus the man, but a great deal about the kind of poetry he was writing: individualistic, aggressive, comic invective, which deliberately defines itself against the ethos of Homeric epic.

Michael Schmidt is dismissive of academic skepticism about ancient Greek poets' lives, claiming about Archilochus that "a surprisingly real person fills out our ignorance." I am not at all sure what this densely metaphorical statement means. Probably Archilochus was "real," in the sense that somebody called "Archilochus" wrote all or most of the fragments attributed to him, although it is quite possible that "Archilochus"—a military term meaning "sergeant"—was the poet's title, not his name. Archilochus's poetry includes a lot of precise circumstantial detail. It is gritty, dirty, down-to-earth. In this sense, Archilochus keeps it real. Yet our almost total ignorance of his actual life story can hardly be mitigated or "filled out" by his realism. After all, the Muses say many things like the truth, and they do not add up to biography.

Schmidt is unreasonable to dismiss these issues as academic quibbles. The fundamental point is that poetry need not be a report on the poet's life. The ability to understand and to enjoy poetry as poetry, and not as evidence for facts about the author's life, is hardly confined to academics; it is an essential quality for any competent reader. But Schmidt relies heavily on the false assumption that "untheorized" people, both in antiquity and today, prefer fact to fiction. He acknowledges that Archilochus might have made it all up, but he adds that "it is doubtful whether his audience would have found a fiction as tantalizing as a tale based on real people." This assumption also informs his overstated assurances to his readers that we should "believe" even the least plausible myths about the ancient Greek poets. These claims suffuse his whole book with the odor of bad faith. Schmidt is aware of the lack of biographical evidence for these ancient lives, but he insists that unless we take the legends as an article of faith, we will lose them altogether. Now, children, are you willing to let Tinkerbell die? Do you believe in fairies?

Schmidt declares that he begins his book "as a believer." His first "life" is an account of the obviously mythical figure of Orpheus, in whom he claims to believe, arguing that "modern historical scepticism must not bridle us or we will have no Orpheus to converse with and no stories to tell." Six impossible things before breakfast is one thing; but this book contains twenty-five implausible and entirely undocumented lives. Schmidt puts an enormous strain on his reader's credulity. But the effort is entirely superfluous, and one wonders why Schmidt felt compelled to make it.

Why on earth would an educated, well-read man, himself a poet, a magazine editor, and a publisher of poetry, assume that everyone, ancient and modern, will be interested only in facts and not in fictions? Why could Schmidt not examine and paraphrase the legends without claiming that they are true? The answer to this puzzle seems to lie in Schmidt's own critical persona, which is no-nonsense and authoritative in the manner of an old-fashioned nanny. None of this flimflam about myth and interpretation for him: he prefers good clean facts, a firm set of value judgments, and lights out before eight. By insisting that there must be no gray area between fact and fiction, Schmidt finds himself writing a book where myth and history are confused.

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SCHMIDT IS ALREADY THE AUthor of a much-acclaimed *Lives of the Poets*, a survey of more than three hundred Anglophone poets; and both *The First Poets* and *Lives of the Poets* make an obvious nod to Samuel Johnson. Now, Johnsonian criticism may mean several things. It might denote a tendency to generalize, a refusal to count the stripes on a tulip. It might mean that criticism should be, like life, an arena for spiritual struggle. (In the *Life of Milton*, Johnson grapples with his own intense dislike of Milton the man, whom he sees as a kind of Satan, fundamentally dishonest both in his work and his life, narcissistic, tyrannical, pretentious, horrible to his wives and daughters, politically wrongheaded and inspired to republicanism only by his "envious hatred of greatness"—but Johnson is ultimately able to acknowledge that this creep produced a work of sublime genius that he regards as second only to the *Iliad*.) At its worst, the would-be Johnsonian critic might simply adopt a pompous and fruity style, the kind that demands the reader's silent assent. This is the mode recommended by Stephen Potter in his brilliant account of how to appear authoritative: "If you have nothing to say, or, rather, something extremely stupid and obvious, say it, but in a 'plonking' tone of voice—i.e. roundly, but hollowly and dogmatically."

Like Schmidt's earlier book, his new book is designed as an introduction for the non-specialist. It makes sense, then, that it consists very largely of paraphrase, both of the poets themselves and of the work of classical scholars. As an upmarket version of Cliffs Notes, *The First Poets* is both marketable and valuable. There is no real harm in stating the obvious. Some truisms are true. And so, as Schmidt tells us, Sappho was "an incomparable artist, innovative in her techniques, unique in sensibility," and Pindar's art "sometimes gets quite lost in translation."

But there is some harm in stating what is highly debatable as if it were common sense. Schmidt is very dogmatic, and he relies too heavily on the plonking tone of voice. Several of the Greek poets are roundly condemned: the work of Semonides of Amorgos is "verse" and "not poetry," and Bacchylides is "cloying." Schmidt often adopts an infuriatingly superior attitude toward the classical scholars and translators whose work he plunders. He tells us, for instance, that "when Peter Jay thinks he is translating Simonides, he may be the victim of exquisite forgeries," because many of the epigrams that have passed down under Simonides's name are probably by later authors. But this is hardly an obscure piece of information: Jay, a learned and elegant translator, was presumably aware that Simonides did not compose all of Simonides.

Schmidt frequently makes comparisons between Greek poetry and English poetry as a useful way to draw the Greek-less reader into the subject. Unfortunately, the comparisons are often superficial. The Alexandrian poet Callimachus famously suggests in his *Aetia* that it is better to write short, precise, delicate poems than big sprawling modern epics: *méga biblíon, méga kakón*, "a long book is a great evil." Schmidt reminds us that long poems in the ancient world were a physical problem for the reader as well as a literary one. (A really long poem, such as the *Iliad*, would take up a roll of 140 papyrus feet, at least if it were inscribed continuously, rather than broken up into the usual twenty-four books.) All this is fine contextualization, though slightly beside the point. But Schmidt adds that "a modern poet-librarian, Philip Larkin, echoing Callimachus, declared, 'Books are a load of crap,' and he didn't even have the labour of re-winding them." The comparison to Larkin, an exceedingly un-Alexandrian writer, is glib and unhelpful. Callimachus never said that books were crap, and unlike Larkin in the poem that Schmidt is citing, Callimachus never suggested that life might be the thing. He always preferred reading.

THE *FIRST POETS* IS A SIGNIficantly worse book than *Lives of the Poets*. It is hard not to suspect that Schmidt, despite his versatility, was not really qualified to write it. He frequently cites transliterated Greek words, and implies that he has read in the original the poems that he discusses; but there are some suspicious mistranslations of basic words. He does not seem to realize that *philos* in Homeric Greek often means "one's own" as well as "dear," or that *homoios* means "of the same kind," not "by each other." And his account of Greek meter is muddled and confusing. Schmidt relies far more heavily here than in the previous book on secondary sources, and the authorities cited are an odd hodgepodge. Schmidt has obviously made great use of Lesky's and Bowra's antique guides to Greek literature, but his use of more recent scholarship is erratic and unreliable.

Perhaps it does not matter that Schmidt's Greek is less good than it might be. After all, as Virginia Woolf pointed out in her essay "On Not Knowing Greek," nobody really knows Greek in the sense that people know English. The experience of reading Greek poetry, even for a trained classicist, will always be mediated through commentaries, dictionaries, and textual reconstruction. Since none of us is a native speaker, we can never be sure what nuances we have missed; our response to Alcman or Pindar can never be as quick or as direct as our response to Eliot, Shakespeare, or even Chaucer. Moreover, Greek lyric poetry was written for the lyre, and without the music we are clearly missing half or more than half of the experience. We are like deaf people studying the lyrics to *Don Giovanni*.

A good book might have been written about what one can get out of Greek lyric read only in translation. Certainly, not everything is lost: the sense of imperfect access to the text may itself be a source of imaginative inspiration, as it was for Keats and for Yeats. But this is not the book that Schmidt has written. He alludes to himself as an "amateur" who wishes to "open out" classical literature to the non-specialist, but he never makes it clear whether knowing Greek counts as specialist knowledge. He wants to have it both ways, spreading great literature to the plebs while retaining his own position as a high literary authority. But even general readers do not enjoy being patronized. Though Schmidt hopes to knock the academics off their throne and set himself up in their place, new priest is but old presbyter writ large. ■

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WASHINGTON DIARIST

Socialist Evolution

I FIRST MET JIMMY WEINSTEIN, who died last week at age 78, in the spring of 1969, when my little world—and that of the New Left—were both coming apart. I had just learned that I would not be welcome back at graduate school. I dreamed of becoming a full-time activist, but Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), to which I belonged, had become infatuated with insurrectionary violence and disdainful of books and ideas. Jimmy was just the person I was looking for.

HE WAS THEN IN HIS FORTIES, A FORmer communist and a noted historian. He was tall, thin, and balding, with a goatee, owlish glasses, a wry smile, and a penchant for puns and quips. (He would title his critique of SDS's Weatherman group "A Short Reign and No Thunder.") His father's real-estate investments in Manhattan had made him wealthy, but, unlike other leftists, he was unapologetic about his class background. He lived modestly, but he loved good cars and, at the time, drove a white Mercedes.

JIMMY WAS TRYING TO PROMOTE A NEW socialist theoretical journal based on the idea that the New Left, out of ignorance, was replicating the errors of the old. While the old left had looked to the Soviet Union as its model of a better society, the new was looking to Cuba and China. By contrast, Jimmy wanted to return to what he saw as the authentically American socialism of Eugene Debs's pre–World War I party. He wanted a socialism that would eliminate the inequalities of wealth and power created by the market, but would do so by strengthening, rather than abolishing, U.S. democratic institutions—an idea that set him apart from many New Left radicals.

JIMMY ENVISIONED SOCIALISM AS PUBlic ownership and control of the countries' industries through some combination of national planning and workplace self-management. No one would own stocks and bonds in big companies. The oil industry, for instance, would be a branch of government like the post office once was; the unemployed would be put to work fixing up the country's infrastructure; and government-paid health care would be available for all. Beyond that, details were fuzzy.

JIMMY HIRED ME TO HELP RUN THE business and to copyedit manuscripts on the new journal, but I also got to participate in the "collective" that chose which articles we'd run. We decided to call it *Socialist Revolution*—"socialist" as opposed to communist, but "revolution" because we didn't want the SDS hard-liners to dismiss us as wimps. We published a number of essays that were turned into influential books, but, as the New Left disintegrated, the title of our journal became an embarrassment. Jimmy and I each went our own way after five years, but, in December 1976, I rejoined him in Chicago, where he had started a socialist weekly called *In These Times*.

MOST OF JIMMY'S SEMINAL POLITICAL experiences had occurred before I met him. He joined the Communist Party in 1948 after getting out of the Navy and enrolling in Cornell, where, among other things, he chauffeured a taciturn Julius Rosenberg between Ithaca and New York. He didn't know what Rosenberg was up to, but he had his suspicions. (He would later inspire Ron Radosh to write about the Rosenbergs and would defend his conclusion that Julius was a spy.) After graduating, Jimmy worked for years as an organizer in an electronics factory. He finally quit the party in 1956 after Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev's revelation about Josef Stalin's crimes. He didn't become a neoconservative, but much of his writing was devoted to explaining how the American Communist Party had undermined the American left.

JIMMY'S MOST LASTING CONTRIBUTIONS were two books he wrote in the early '60s, after leaving the party. Most historians at the time believed that Debs's Socialist Party had been fatally co-opted in 1912 by the rise of progressivism. But, in *The Decline of Socialism in America*, Jimmy showed that the party had actually grown steadily afterward—only being undone by the rise of the American Communist Party. His second book, *The Corporate Ideal in the Liberal State*, was one of the first to advance the idea that many progressive reforms of the early twentieth century were the products of upper-class reformers attempting to dampen working-class militancy.

JIMMY HAD SEVERAL OFFERS TO BEcome an academic historian, but he was never interested. Theory and history had to yield practical results—and he was sometimes wildly optimistic about what these would be. He thought *Socialist Revolution* would give birth to a new socialist party. And he believed that *In These Times* would inspire a vibrant socialist caucus inside a Democratic Party. (He had no patience for single-issue or identity politics.) When reality set in—in the latter case, Ronald Reagan's 1980 landslide—he laughed at his own folly but then fashioned a new scenario by which the left would reemerge.

JIMMY REMAINED A SOCIALIST TO THE end, but he gradually modified his view of socialism. He no longer envisaged a planned market-less economy, or even a world without capitalists. In *The Long Detour*, which appeared in 2003, he described socialism as a set of principles—"the fulfillment of democracy" and the achievement of liberty *and* equality. Socialism was not so much an end result, but a passionate ideal against which the politics of the present had to be measured. Those who pursued that ideal weren't necessarily "socialists." They could be liberals like two of his favorite politicians, former Chicago Mayor Harold Washington and the late Minnesota Senator Paul Wellstone. Jimmy's socialism became what is now called "values." But those values still provide a useful contrast not only with the right's business conservatism, but also with the vacuous centrism of many Democrats.

I SAW JIMMY FOR THE LAST TIME IN May in Chicago, where he lay felled by a brain tumor that was gradually sapping his mind and body. We talked fitfully about the past. I found myself completely inadequate to the occasion. As I was leaving, I grasped his hand and told him I hoped I would see him again in July, when I came to Chicago for the AFL-CIO convention—"or," I added gracelessly, "whenever." He smiled ruefully and said, "Yes, whenever," and gave my hand a last, fateful squeeze. **JOHN B. JUDIS**

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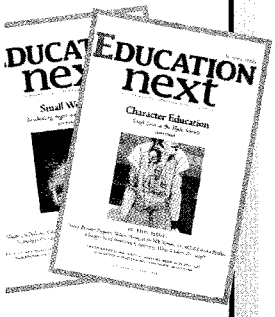

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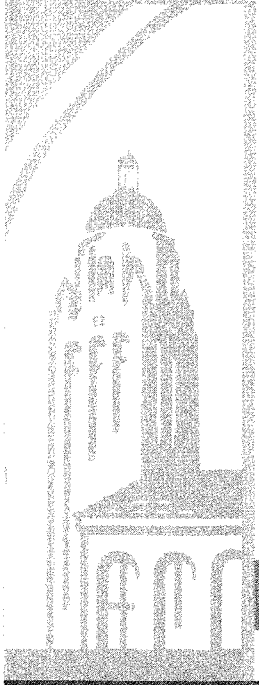

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In the Summer 2005 Issue of *Education Next*...

The School Lunch Lobby

A charmed federal food program that no longer just feeds the hungry

Consistent with the intent of the original 1946 law, the major purpose of today's school-lunch program is to ensure that children, especially those from poor and low-income families, have nutritious food at school. We created school lunch to feed the hungry. Can we now ask it to fight obesity? How these programs, and the money that travels with them, have grown steadily over the years is a story that illustrates many of the underlying mechanisms of social policy creation in the nation's capital. Since the strength and longevity of the programs comes from an ample and well-balanced diet of public compassion, political sensitivities, and powerful lobbying, change does not come easily. With well-funded and sophisticated national organizations, groups lobby for more federal money while fighting to keep federal mandates to a minimum.

—Ron Haskins

The Accidental Principal

What doesn't get taught at ed schools?

The principal's critical role in the No Child Left Behind era may just be taken for granted. There is growing evidence to suggest that the revolution in school organization, management, and curricular affairs may have left principals behind. In a 2003 report, the nonpartisan research organization, Public Agenda, reported that today's school superintendents want their principals to display prowess in everything from accountability to instructional leadership and teacher quality; but principals themselves don't think they are equipped for these duties. In fact, two-thirds of the principals polled by Public Agenda report that "leadership programs in graduate schools of education are out of touch" with what principals need to know.

—Frederick Hess and Andrew Kelly

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